MANY WATERS

MARJORIE
BARKLEY
McCLURE

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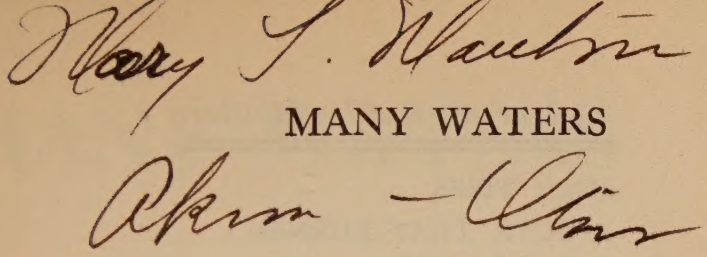
Sincerely yours,
Madjone Barkley McClu



MANY WATERS

By Marjorie Barkley McClure

HIGH FIRES
A BUSH THAT BURNED
THE PRICE OF WISDOM
MANY WATERS

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BY

MARJORIE BARKLEY McCLURE

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TO MY BROTHER,

EARL,

THE PERFECT COMRADE

OF A HAPPY CHILDHOOD.

. . . for love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire which hath a most vehement flame.

Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it.

SONG OF SOLOMON viii. 6, 7.

1915–1920

MANY WATERS

I

AT a little after four o'clock on a June afternoon in the year nineteen fifteen, Alice Speare arrived in White Falls to take up her duties as Rosalind Karanoff's governess.

She stepped from the dusty heat of a long day in the chair car to the cindered ground at the far end of the station platform, and drew a deep breath of the northern Wisconsin freshness.

A second draught of piney air brought a faint smile to her brown and slightly troubled eyes as they searched the crowd of strange faces. *When you arrive look for a young chauffeur in tan livery,* Mrs. Karanoff's letter had said, *and make yourself known to him.*

She went forward ready to address such a person, but almost immediately she was overtaken by a tall man, young indeed, who said briefly, "Miss Speare, I believe. Mrs. Karanoff's car."

The chauffeur's quickness in recognizing her, his livery and the shining perfection of the car toward which he led her were as tonic to Alice Speare's nerves as the fresh sweetness of the northern air had been to her nostrils.

Was this an indication of the sort of establishment to which she had come? Perfect machinery? Perfect service? If so they would exact the utmost of her for the little girl of whom her mother had written: *Though Rosalind will not be five until July she has a capacity beyond the usual kindergarten curriculum. Mr. Karanoff is ambitious for her and is anxious to save her from forming habits of mental laziness. So your duties will not be those of a nursery governess, even though Rosalind is so young.*

Alice Speare's work as a teacher for ten years in The Belden School for Girls had tested her endurance for almost continuous nerve wear. The pressure had been applied from a dozen different directions, whereas in this new environment there would be but one demand, and she preferred that that demand, even though it gave no quarter, should be part of an ideal of perfection such as she sensed behind the chauffeur and the car. Already it was rebuking her indifference to dress and making her conscious of the travel creases in her new brown suit.

The tall young man opened the door of the limousine, revealing an amethyst velvet interior that Alice was classifying as a jewel casket. Her eye was engaged with the silver fittings, and she did not at once see the jewel that made her trite comparison peculiarly apt. The chauffeur, with a gesture that might have been the word Behold! indicated the near corner where a little girl in a frock as pink as pale coral, with eyes of deep shining blue like gold-flecked lazuli, was giving

her the welcome of tense expectancy and a wide shy smile.

At her side Alice heard a sound that was hardly a laugh, but something like, and she glanced up to see that the young man's immobile servitude had given way to a delighted grin. The little girl's glance was flashing from one to the other of the two faces that smiled upon her, and she tucked her hands under the skirt of her dress as if for very shyness she were trying to hide under her own small self.

"This must be . . . Rosalind," Miss Speare said with a delight that put a catch in her voice; and at the nodding of the child's head with its crowning confusion of sun-dusted curls, she continued, "You came to the train to meet me so that we could be friends from the first minute, didn't you? I hoped you would want to do that."

Again Rosalind nodded while the smile that revealed a double row of tiny teeth pressed tight together was lifted to the young chauffeur with an appeal to him to share her ecstatic pleasure in the new gray-brown lady.

"Rosalind could hardly wait for you," the young man said. "She's been asking all day when it would be time for your train. Rosalind's going to be a cook when she grows up, and she wants to begin learning things."

Alice Speare stepped into the car and sat down on the wide seat, while Rosalind, eagerly making room for her, moved farther and farther into the corner un-

til between them there was room for two more of Miss Speare's slim dimensions.

With the news that Rosalind meant to be a cook the young man closed the door and took his place behind the wheel. He glanced inquiringly over his shoulder at Rosalind and seeing that she had forgotten him in her sobering scrutiny of the new governess, he started the motor.

"Are you really going to be a cook, Rosalind, when you grow up?" Miss Speare asked, and with the question she laid her hand, palm upturned, on the seat between them as an invitation for the clasp of friendship.

Rosalind nodded and her lips moved sweetly to say a precise little, "Yes, I am." But she was looking at the hand, while she still kept her own securely hidden under her dress.

In Alice Speare's eyes there appeared a quick brightness. This little unspoiled child was to be hers for modeling and shaping. She was to be delivered into her hands, guileless and without stain, sunrise in her eyes and faith in the warmth of her smile.

She had never understood the teachers who let the tedium of work with children harden and sour them. Her imagination, with the sense of humor which, in her, ever partook of tenderness, and her love for all small things gave her calling the ecstasy that mitigated the tedium.

She turned her face from the child to look into the commonplaceness of a White Falls street. This might be the beginning of compensation for the love she had

resigned to an ideal; this might be fulfillment of an all but vanished dream.

Aware, at once, that she was allowing the child's shy beauty to awake a hope that experience had taught her was premature, she turned back to Rosalind with smiling gravity. "If you're going to be a cook, Rosalind, we must have you the very best cook in the world. What is it you want especially to make?"

"Apple pie," said Rosalind. "Pablo makes them out of cherries now."

Alice twinkled. "Pablo, I suppose, with that nice name, must be a man from the Philippines, perhaps? Or maybe Mexico."

Rosalind shook her head. "Mother brought him from Califormya," she offered, with such a look as might be wonder that Miss Speare should not have known; but after a moment of grave scrutiny she began to smile again, with the radiant illumination of eyes and a return of the shyness that was explained by a movement of one hand from under the pink skirt.

Slowly the outspread fingers reached nearer and nearer the waiting palm of the new friend's hand, and when they stole softly into the clasp that received them the smile again vanished from the expressive little face and was replaced by wonder.

Touch opened a new channel for impressions, and Rosalind gave herself receptively to that sense as it spoke to the inner ear of her consciousness.

By the time the swift moving car had turned from the main street to follow a winding drive at the base

of a long hill, Rosalind's preliminary inquiry was finished. She began to laugh, and Miss Speare laughed with her, their eyes twinklingly engaged with each other; and then, knowing the moment had come, Alice drew the little body toward her, cuddled it close against her side, and cried, "Now we are friends, for ever and ever, and this is where you belong!"

II

EVERY moment of the ride from the station to the house had deepened Alice's first impression as to the outward order and beauty of Mr. Karanoff's possessions.

Kneeling on the seat, Rosalind had excitedly called attention to the long stretch of ivy-grown buildings in the distance on top of which a huge sign, Northern Wisconsin Paper Company, was translated by Rosalind—"My daddy's office." And when, fifteen minutes later, they left the city streets to turn in a wide curve toward a pair of battlemented towers that flanked the entrance gates to a lovely walled-in park, Rosalind slid to the edge of the seat and sat erect with expectancy. "This is our house," she confided with dignity.

Even in that brief flash Alice recognized the gates as the original of a small engraving on Mrs. Karanoff's letter paper below the house name, The Towers.

She looked out into the park that rose up the hillsides to right and left of the drive as far as she could

see. Red bark paths wound among the trees; there were borders of flowers informally placed, and at one point a low rustic bridge that must lead over a little stream invisible from the car.

On the crown of the hill was a house of white stucco recently cleaned, it would seem, for it lay a dazzling pile in the sunlight amidst a bordering thicket of low evergreen planting. There were arched doors and windows, and awnings as gay as a Spanish shawl that flashed like the banners of an army across her vision before the car slipped into the shadow of a wide *porte-cochère* and stopped to let them out.

At once Rosalind became the eager hostess. "That's my kiddie car right there. And that's my little brother!" she cried, wild with her desire to show her treasures to her new friend. She took Miss Speare's hand to lead her toward the lawn, where a baby's perambulator, swathed in a haze of green netting, was presided over by a nurse, but ceased her urgency when an old man in butler's livery interfered with quiet firmness. Miss Speare was to be taken to her room at once. "She can see the baby later when he has his bath," he finished persuasively.

Instantly Rosalind led forward toward the dim vistas of a great hall that opened before them. "This way," she kept crying with beckoning brightness, as if she felt the need of encouraging the stranger on so wide a journey, and she glanced back over her shoulder from time to time as she thumped up the vast staircase, to be sure her friend was following. "We haven't room

in this house for the baby *and* the nurse *and* you *and* me and *every*body just now," she explained with explicit stressing of important words in the manner of an adult to a child. "We have to have a nursery *over* the ballroom. And we're going to have a guest house *down by the lake* where the birch trees are." Her breath was spent, but she gasped and went on. "Then when grandmother comes she won't have to be *right* under daddy's feet all the *time*."

Miss Speare regretted that she must deflect the ingenuous flow. She remarked, "You are a very fortunate little girl to have a baby brother and a grandmother too, I think."

"Yes. I've had the grandmother a *long* time, but the baby is *new*. He came one Sunday while I was at Clara's house. And when I came home he was *here*. He's three months old."

They had reached the top of the long flight, where the hall swept in a circle around the well of the staircase. Doors, painted variously, their panels highly decorated with symbolic figures and flowers, alternated with mirrors wherein Alice saw herself reflected at several angles.

Rosalind darted into a room that was mellow with sunlight, with mulberry and green; the man set her traveling bag on a luggage stand and asked for the check to her trunk.

They had reached journey's end. Rosalind, far from exhausted by the stairs, was still talking as she hopped on one foot, but to Alice, the room was more compel-

ling than the child's chatter. Its green satin, like wet rose leaves, and the clear fruity richness of the mulberry were warmed by oblique rays of sunlight that came through and under the Spanish awnings. The doors, like those in the hall, were decorated with figures, pagan in their suggestion, in the same gold-brushed colorings. Gold-embroidered velvet covered the bed.

While Alice found the check, Rosalind's voice was going on in its quaint recital. She heard ". . . dinner ver-ry early so my daddy can get acquainted with his child. . . ." and "This is the first room my mother saw in this house. She was all dressed up, like a princess. . . ."

Rosalind did not finish but leaped forward with a cry of delight to a little woman who stood hesitating in the doorway. Alice waited, smiling, while the two met and moved forward together, the child embracing the mother's slim thighs, the mother's arm about the child, her palm cupped under the little upturned chin.

"Fragile," was Alice's immediate thought, "and beautiful." Dark, pale, spirituelle. . . . This was the niece of her favorite actress, Mabel Spencer. How alike they were, and how different! There was the same distinctive contour and grace, yet, in the actress, commanding beauty and starry assurance; in the niece an almost wincing sensitiveness and a quality of appeal. One might expect to stammer with self-consciousness in the presence of the glorious Mabel Spencer, but

never with this young woman whose smile was as winning as Rosalind's.

As the two advanced into the brighter light, facing the windows, that first impression of physical frailty deepened. There was a startling streak of white in her plainly dressed black hair, but it was not more startling than its companion mark—a disturbing look of trouble as if tears were close behind the dark blue eyes that yet poured forth an indescribable light.

Alice gave her hand, surprised, herself, at the warmth of the clasp this look drew from her. As Mrs. Karanoff spoke commonplaces of the journey and the child, Alice noticed her voice. Obviously, from its enunciation and a minor note in the treble, it had been trained for the stage, and it too carried that disturbing quality of appeal.

As Alice regarded her in charmed contemplation, she decided that candor, or rather an innate honesty, was the most certain characteristic revealed by the face. A frivolous coiffure would easily have hidden the band of premature white, and contradicted the troubled eyes and voice, yet not only the hair, but Mrs. Karanoff's clothing was unaffectedly plain.

She had evidently been resting, for she was wrapped in an unadorned white dressing-gown that revealed the hemstitched top of a silk camisole. As she stooped above Rosalind the sunlight illumined the delicate blue-veined pallor of her breast and neck. It was a pallor that reminded Alice at once of the baby on the lawn. The infant was a satisfactory explanation of the look

of spiritual irradiance peculiar to the flesh of young mothers. Life had all but gone out from her; she was still doubtless giving of the very essence of her body, and spirit poured in to fill the lack.

III

WHEN Alice had taken leave of Mr. and Mrs. Karanoff after the first crowded hours in their home, she found herself so tense with excitement that she turned with her foot on the lowest step of the stairs and looked toward the fragrant darkness of the terrace. She would step out there in the starlight to let the tremor of her happiness subside before she attempted to sleep.

The terrace lay above the formal gardens, and the formal gardens were above the lake, so that through the dark pluminess of the trees she could faintly discern the midnight blue of calm water. At intervals along the terrace there were enormous terra cotta jars filled with flowers. To one of these she went blindly, and bent to inhale the sweet pungency of rose geranium.

During the dozen years since the tragic events of her life had transformed her from a gold and brown nymph to a dimmed woman of resignation, she had been hunting for a home such as this in which to find solace for her increasing loneliness, and she had accepted the post as a summer occupation with the hope

that it would prove so pleasant an engagement that she would become permanently a member of the household.

In her experience of rich men's houses, Alice was a disillusioned visitor. She had been the guest countless times of various pupils, and she had found perfection in detail of living less often than a certain appalling slackness beneath an expensive show of efficiency.

In this house it was not so. The place was, as she had sensed at first, to be a test of her not only as a woman disciplined to professional patience with the young, but as an instructor. Mr. Karanoff's ideas were extreme, but even so she felt certain that she would meet his requirements; she had no fear of that. Her excitement arose wholly from delight in her new environment and from her conviction that they had liked her even as she liked them.

Mr. and Mrs. Karanoff had seemed to invite her searching inspection of their home to-night, and into whatever corner she had sent a shaft of inquiry she had found, if not the beautiful, at least the interesting.

Her friend, Miss Belden, principal of the school in which she had been teaching, had made inquiry concerning the Karanoff family, and the confidential letters that had promptly reported from a clergyman and a banker, both of White Falls, had prepared her for evidence of substantial finances, a charming lady and child, but in the personality of Mr. Karanoff a doubtful quantity.

The clergyman had written: *Mr. Karanoff is Russian in birth and name, but in nothing more as I see*

him, though I believe he is inordinately proud of his father's race. He is nouveau riche American rather, a man of whom some unpleasant tales are told, I am sorry to say. These, however, I discount considerably. He seems to me to be a quiet enough citizen, and since the birth of his little daughter he has been generous to our new and much needed hospital and, recently, to my own church where his charming little Rosalind is enrolled in the Sunday School.

Since Miss Speare is to live in his house, she may be wise to inquire more searchingly into his colorful reputation than I am qualified to do. I can testify to his responsibility as an employer. He can well afford a governess for his child. His wife—an American of a well known theatrical family, and niece of Mabel Spencer, the actress—came here as a professional dancing teacher eight years ago. She is universally beloved, and his house is one of White Falls' show places.

The banker had dwelt upon Mr. Karanoff's solid financial rating, refraining from remark on his morality.

"Better," Miss Belden had advised her, "that Mr. Karanoff should be the doubtful one. Since Mrs. Karanoff is universally beloved, the place is worth a trial."

Yes, certainly, the experience of these few hours had shown it to be worth not only a trial but her greatest effort. The little Rosalind was the lovely flower of her mother's unique sincerity and good sense. All the household, in fact, showed the imprint of her quality. As if she had found fresh fruit where she had

expected exotic confections, Alice had come upon all manner of pretty simplicities that were none of Mr. Karanoff's doing; in fact, he had complained of them.

Alice consciously postponed an analysis of him, for she had come to only two conclusions concerning him—that one could easily imagine the colorful reputation which the clergyman charitably discounted, and that he was Jew as well as Slav. It was only by his name that one knew he was not American, and but for the countenance of the baby boy she would not have supposed he was Hebrew, yet it was impossible not to see the distinguishing evidence of the race in the infant's face. The boy was so like his father, and so much more Jewish than his father, that it was amusing to read the tale in the tiny features. His pointed profile was the antithesis of Rosalind's. Rosalind's silhouette, studied at table against the bright Pompeian wall of the dining loggia, was so straight that if a plummet were dropped down her forehead, along the upper lip, it would coincide with the line of the chin. Only the tip of a piquant nose and the outward curves of petal lips projected beyond the imaginary perpendicular, but in the baby's features a plummet would find no parallel. The forehead receded slightly, the chin receded, not weakly but with the "foreign" slant far behind the projecting prominence of nose and brow and lips. Yes, the infant—Nico, they called him, since he was named Nicolai for his father—proclaimed his paternity, and when Alice had said so Mrs. Karanoff's face had brightened happily. "Rosalind and I are so

much alike," she explained, smiling in her way of overlaying tears with humor, "that we very much want Nico to be like his father, don't we, Rosalind?"

Rosalind had wriggled her own index finger into the baby's closed fist as she answered, "Yes, we do and so does daddy. 'I'll disown that child if he doesn't look like me,' daddy said."

Mrs. Karanoff had brushed her lips across Rosalind's forehead. "And now," she said, "he does look like him. More every day," and added with a flash of amusement, "with a vengeance. He is like his mother's family."

True, Alice thought, smiling into the darkness, it was with a vengeance, for the baby gave no promise of good looks yet, while Mr. Karanoff was a handsome man. So handsome, so fascinating in a cold hostile sort of passionateness of glance and speech that the very atmosphere about him seemed peopled with figures from the demi-monde of that colorful reputation.

He was twice as old as his wife, or almost, and as she was remembering Mrs. Karanoff's slight physique and his tall dignity it seemed that he must be nearly twice her bulk as well. His chin was heavy, his shoulders broad, his waist line of a middle-aged fullness, but even so they were not mismated, for there was the flame of an indomitable youth in his eye.

He had not found reason to give her—Alice—more than a first keen scrutiny. His penetrating black gaze had made her as conscious of her fading youth as if his eyes were mirrors. She need not fear that she would interest him as a woman. During these first few days

she must study and analyze him, not critically, but in the effort toward understanding. And she must admit now, even if to do so was to begin with criticism, that he was the sort of man whose wife would be expected to look exactly as Mrs. Karanoff looked. He would pick fresh fruit, desiring it because it was fresh, and then immediately he would put it through the wine press of his own insensitive demands.

But that was enough thought of him. He wasn't going to count heavily in her life under his roof. The thing that counted, after Rosalind and her mother, was the spirit of the house, and that she had found warm and human with kindliness. The impeccable young chauffeur, for instance, Peter Gaffney, whose efficiency had challenged her for a moment upon her arrival, was a student with an unusual record who was working his way through the University of Wisconsin. Woodey, the nurse, was a pathetic case. Her arches had broken; she had need to earn her living as a nurse and Mrs. Karanoff, hearing of her plight, had sought and engaged her for the baby with the understanding that her feet should be saved in every possible way. "Woodey sits beside Nico's carriage on the lawn instead of wheeling him in the afternoons, for one thing," Mrs. Karanoff explained. "It saves Woodey's feet and it really ought to be a good thing for Nico. It will make him less restless to view a motionless landscape from his carriage than a moving one."

It was of Woodey as a member of his household that Mr. Karanoff had complained with an extravagance

that, she could see, he meant should convey a degree of wry humor.

"Not only must we handicap our son with a decrepit nurse," he said, "but we must take on Woodey's daughter, Lucy, for Rosalind. The point being, as my wife could explain, that it makes Woodey and Lucy both happy, and Lucy is more willing to supply foot work for Woodey than another girl would be. So Woodey supplies the foot work and Mrs. Karanoff makes up for what Lucy fails to accomplish, and there we are at the point *I* see in the arrangement: Mrs. Karanoff employs herself—a job."

IV

ALICE turned, and as she began to pace the terrace she drew her scarf close about her shoulders, for the June darkness held a penetrating chill. Inhaling deeply, she caught the scent of water and of pine, a fragrance so arresting that she stopped her pacing and stood motionless while her questing sense caught again and held the precious attar of the north.

"Life is good; life is beautiful," she whispered, answering the mood of futility that of late had possessed her almost constantly. Already it had lifted, for she was living now for one beloved: Rosalind. Her desire was the creative force that sired the love, her hungry affection the cherishing warmth that mothered it.

The radiance of a profound gratitude illumined her

and gave ecstasy to every sense. She saw into the darkness—the gleam of the pool that mirrored the stars, the faces of peonies like a constellation of little moons, and the pale butterflies that morning would tell her, as evening had told her to-day, were lingering iris. Led through the gardens by Rosalind, she had seen pansies, roses and syringa in the pristine loveliness of their June. They were down there now in the garden lifting their blended fragrance to the night, just as hope and joy were in her spirit, lifting their fragrance to the breaking darkness of her loneliness.

She had not felt the hope of happiness such as this day had brought her in the twelve years since the shocking moment when she had read the story of her own beginnings in the unknown uncle's letter.

The curtain of summer darkness rose upon that remote scene which yet was far more real to Alice than the tiles beneath her feet. She saw again the square New England bedroom with its high windows primly dressed in ruffled dimity, its maple furniture ancient of days, and the ingrain carpet that her mother had bought in a moment of aberration, and for which she still apologized in the soft tones of oval braided rugs laid here and there upon its unsuitable design.

It was a cold August morning, pearl gray, with a fog that set Alice shivering in her thin work apron. On the bed a dwindling length of man lay dying, his unshaven cheeks sucked in against toothless gums, his closed eyes sunk into sockets so deep that his forehead protruded like the visor of a helmet. Alice regarded him

a long moment before she sat down to read the mail, marveling that anything so cadaverous could retain the spark of life.

He had always been an old man to Alice, who had been born when he was forty-eight and her mother forty-one; it was during the second spring of their sojourn in Joplin, Missouri, where they had gone for a period of sixteen months to look after their interest in the zinc mines that were their most important investment.

They had been childless until that experience which became, because of Alice's birth, the outstanding year of their life together. To leave their native village and the beloved home on Brewster Street for so long a residence in a west that was almost like a foreign land to them, would have been enough to mark it as high adventure, but Alice's arrival had given it the importance of climax.

"Money was coming in fast from the mines," they had always told Alice when they recounted the story for her childish ears, "and we knew we could do everything in the world for you. You would never be sorry that you were our little girl even though we were so old."

In their way they had "done everything in the world" for Alice. It was an inhibited way, as practical as the creamed codfish that, to them, was gracious fare. But when, in her fifteenth year, the zinc mines became the spoils of a tricky syndicate, they were reduced to even plainer living than they considered comfortable,

and they had both broken under the shock of the disappointment.

Mrs. Speare had died a few months after the calamity, and Nathaniel had survived her these eight years, more dead than alive, a palsied whispering old man whose descent into the grave was as gradual as the forward movement of a watch's hour hand.

But for George Hodson, those last months of her father's life would have been almost unbearable for Alice. She was twenty-three and teaching in the village school—a young thing of responsibility and tender affection to whom the old man clung in depleting dependence.

Fortunately for Alice, the first rosy flush of her love for George hung like a bridal veil between her radiant eyes and the slow corruption of her old father's flesh. She had met George through the summer colony on the shore, a world so distinct from the village world of which she was a part that he seemed to Alice to be a perfect compound of bright modernity and the ancient Arthurian standard of knightly quality.

When she had first met him she had supposed, naively, that he would not be interested in one of her shy type, yet it was exactly that quaint charm in her that attracted him, he told her later. He knew the importance of the Speare family in New England history; he even knew the story of the old house that had been built by Alice's great, great grandfather from plans sketched by Sir Christopher Wren for THE ancestor, a student at Trinity, when Wren was in Cambridge

during the winter of 1665 to oversee the building of the college library. For eighty years the plans had been cherished by reverent Speares despite the vicissitudes of changing fortunes, and when the house was built in 1745, that sketch, with detail of a Gothic doorway suggested in one corner, was framed and hung with ceremony in the library—a sun among the suns of family trees.

When she became aware of George's reverence for her background, Alice accused him of loving the blood in her veins before he had loved herself, and was surprised that he did not deny the playful charge. Instead he talked to her of biology and eugenics, a word quite new to Alice, but expressing a principle in which she believed as profoundly as did George; and when George said, in substance, "Love ought to weigh the matter of ancestors, for the love that brings a handicapped child to life is a sinful love, no matter how securely sealed it may be with marriage," Alice had agreed with a warm glow of responsibility toward all further Speares and Hodsons.

George cared not a fig that Alice was poor. She was a Speare, and the health of proud forebears shone in her brown eyes and glowed through her golden skin, he said. Not that they talked eugenics after that one time; they were lovers like any other pair, and spent no radiant moments in stuffy discussion of the sciences.

On that August morning, when the green world of Gloucester was wrapped in pearl gray mist, Alice opened a letter to her father not even observing that

it was postmarked Joplin, Missouri. She had been given power of attorney in his affairs, and she handled his mail. The letter was written in long hand and began: *Dear Friend Nathaniel.* Even before she began to read, Alice noticed the signature, Charles A. Olmstead, and her own name recurring throughout the text.

Charles A. Olmstead wrote of her from the beginning as "my niece Alice," he was breaking the long silence, he said, to inform Nathaniel of the death of Alice's mother, aged fifty, in the state hospital for the insane. *During all this quarter century, or almost, since you adopted her, I have regretted that I let one of my own blood go out from my care;* he wrote pompously, *yet when I realize that Alice has grown up in the home of my dead brother Sam's dear friend, with no least suspicion that she is the child of a mother so tragically stricken, I can but think that it has been for the best. However, I feel very strongly now that Alice should be told of her own origin, for others of her mother's family have been worse than "queer." Even though I fully sympathize with your reasons for keeping her ignorant, so far, I do believe that you ought to tell her soon. Your days are numbered now, if I remember your age correctly.*

It is not right that Alice should be allowed to go into matrimony ignorant of the fact that her own mother was insane even before her birth, and during all the years of her life. Through the Olmsteads, of course, there is no such taint, and if she is an Olmstead rather than a Pinkney, she may escape, but the doctors tell me

this sort of thing often skips a generation and then recurs. . . .

Alice had never known that she was a fighter until she began to fight that letter. She refused to believe; she demanded proof; she turned against the whole theory of heredity and had to be convinced anew. Then, after the long struggle of which George knew nothing, still fighting, she had hated her own fanatical honesty, for she saw as fanatical the honesty that made it necessary for her to tell George the truth. *That* truth to *George* cost her her love. She knew that would be the price while yet the decision lay with her. George would be chivalrous; he would suffer himself, but gradually the truth would change him. To live a lie to him—that was the alternative she faced. Love against the truth. Love at the cost of her soul's integrity. It was a terrible test of her, and through that testing she learned that honesty rather than passion was fate for her.

There was long deep pain of parting, for George, shocked and defiant, had had need to fight over the ground on which she had been defeated. He was a glorious lover, and yet, greater than the lover in him was the mind of the scientist; his pride of blood. He had really been sincere when, in his first confidences to Alice, he had loved and dreamed and called his love eugenics.

Their engagement had not been "broken" in the usual sense; Alice had never been able to word even to herself the story of its dissolution, for during the first

stress of George's rebellion Nathaniel's death had given her new and different needs and problems. When disposal of the old Speare house was under advisement, George's father had offered to buy it, saying, "You have no blood bond with the place now; you'll have to come into possession of it next through the marriage bond." Then weeks later, when she set her signature upon the deed, he kissed her hand and held it while he said soothingly, insincerely, "We'll keep it safe. You and George will be needing it soon."

He had said those things as if he loved her as a daughter; he had paid a higher price for the house than its real value, and yet he had sent George away immediately on a business trip to the Pacific coast, separating them at the very time when, logically, they should have been married.

From that far point George had begun to write passionately regretful letters. Why had she ever told him the truth? If they had never known—if *he* had never known, he would have had no fears. It was the fear that undid him. By their marriage they might start horrible things to stalking posterity. . . .

Such was the death song of their love, a song like a recessional. And the letters that followed were like the stillness that follows recessional, for he praised her "courageous idealism" in rhetoric that told her he found her honesty more admirable than a love that would accept no obstacle to its flowering. Passion might cool—would cool—but truth such as hers was eternal in its strength and beauty.

She, then, had broken the engagement, as he saw

the affair! For her, the point was that he would accept it. Marriage, with the compromise of adopted children should have been his solution, and but for his family —that sympathetic father who, when he gave with one hand, had robbed her with the other—Alice believed George would have insisted upon the compromise.

George was gone eight weeks, and when he returned she received him in the drawing room of the boarding school in Boston where she was teaching. While the November rain beat on the windows, and the automobiles in the street splashed through pools of slush, they sat tensely apart talking less of their problems than of the Christmas holiday when Alice was to visit the Hodsons in New York. They would settle things then, they agreed. "Settle them my way," George said smiling, but the smile did not deceive her. It drove a knife of illness into her heart and set her shivering with deathly chill.

After he left her that afternoon with such formality of parting as the place imposed, she stood looking at her agued reflection in the mirror. Love was dead; love for her was over forever. . . . The stanchions of her will and all the stoical repression she had learned to practice as a Speare went down, a crumbling fortress, and grief, like an army, poured in over the broken walls of it to wound her.

Through the illness that followed she sent no word to George until the letters that came from him were acknowledged by her nurse. And when he came to Bos-

ton she was still so ill that she was not allowed to talk with him. Then the date for his return was postponed; before he could come she had been taken, a creeping invalid, to Arizona to heal the lungs pneumonia had devastated.

Though she was only twenty-four when she returned east that following spring there was never another lover to test her. She gave all her mind and all her love to her work and to her pupils. Her talent for children, her adaptability and fine sympathetic mind qualified her to take and hold a very desirable position in Miss Belden's School, and while the very nature of her work was such that the first lines in her face were smiling lines, the brown curliness of her hair took on a sheen of gray.

She tried always when she thought of George, to accept the fact of his marriage, three years after their break, as part of life's ironical reward of honor.

V

MRS. KARANOFF had the right to hear her story soon; she would understand because she too was marked by painful experience. It was evident that something from her husband's past had stained her happiness to the mauve of a sadness that had become as much a part of her beautiful youth as the streak of white was part of the luxuriant black of her

hair. Even though it gave depth to her charm, one could hate a man for so darkening the joy in eyes like hers, and yet the matter of compensation must be considered, for the children, this home, and the clearness of her own fine conscience must be heavy cargo in the balance against any disillusionment.

Mr. Karanoff loved her now, whatever he had done once to hurt her. He watched his wife with eyes in which there was a beam of interested inquiry as if he knew her for an original whose thoughts might be expected to surprise him at any moment; and further, for all his air of dominance, his house was ruled utterly by his wife in a way that made him proud of her for doing the very things of which he complained.

Weighed against Alice's sorrow, Mrs. Karanoff might find an erring husband light grief indeed. Alice saw her as she had looked at the table when she was explaining Woodey—her pallor, transparent like the nimbus around a candle flame, and the shadowed depth of her troubled eyes that borrowed blue from her dress. An utterly unpretentious dress, it was, of azure crepe with sleeves and a long frilled V at the neck.

That dress was in harmony with the fact that though there was a dining room, cool under its vaulted roof, galleried round about with old marble arches and mosaic, they had dined in the breakfast loggia on clear bouillon and fresh relishes, on lamb chops and sauceless vegetables, blessed only with butter; on milk and fruits, all of which seemed hardly to have paused in the kitchen on their journey from garden to table.

"I have been reduced to Rosalind's diet by sciatica," Mr. Karanoff complained, his gesture indicating the food. "If you don't like nursery fare this house is not the place for you, Miss Speare. Infancy, childhood and second childhood equalize our needs."

Alice had enjoyed the display of vanity in the frank avowal of his disability. He classed himself as in second childhood certain that it would call the very smile to her face that she knew was there to flatter him. The man had all the attributes and qualities of an actor, and even as Alice knew he wanted and expected the smile of flattery so she also wanted to give it. It was the due of his type, the type women find most attractive, though most women disclaimed, in the absence of such a man, the fact that he was the favorite type. Even the most forthright of men, Alice had observed, gave to such as he the flattery they demanded.

Hardly realizing that she was leaving the whispering loveliness of the night, Alice turned and went into the house. The study where she had left Mr. and Mrs. Karanoff was dark, and the old man, the butler whom they called Gray, was closing windows and the French doors that opened on the terrace.

She smiled at him in passing, and mounted the stairs to a landing that overhung the ballroom like a balcony. The hangings in the arches were looped back, and Alice paused to look down into the great room where shining spaces of polished floor shone like pools of water in the dimness.

Above this ballroom they were to build the nursery suite.

When Mr. Karanoff had shown her through the house that evening, he had told her how he had planned the upper rooms with that probability in mind. And he had added: "I was not married then, but I was definitely in quest of the right lady; and when I saw her one evening almost seven years ago, I knew her at once. Practically, that is, at once. Two days after I met her I determined to marry her."

Alice had liked him best when he showed her the house. His manner said, "Behold I show you a miracle," while his voice carried the careless inflection that tried to make her think he considered it merely an average achievement. He could build one far better and more splendid, he wanted her to know, and yet, as he sketched details for the children's suite, his eyes told her very plainly that he knew nothing could possibly be lovelier. There was even to be a ventilated niche designed and suitable for the children's favorite dog, a dog trained in the care of the children with faculties that would supplement the most capable nurse! They would have their own porch and their tiny nursery kitchen, and bathrooms with plumbing suitable to their size, to be torn out and replaced with larger as they grew older. "Not quite fair," he said, "to expect little grasshopper statures to use fixtures twice too big."

Alice wondered, as she reached her room, if that idea of plumbing according to stature was Mr. Karanoff's idea or his wife's, and decided that it was his.

Mrs. Karanoff would neither pamper nor abuse her children; Mr. Karanoff would do both. He was the sort who, excessively solicitous for the comfort of his little darlings one day, would make an issue of non-essentials for their dear sakes, and quite unreasonably punish them the next day.

She wanted to fortify herself against that in him which would plunge them all into a condition of injustice. To help a child hold loyalty toward a parent such as he, it would be necessary to magnify his virtues and overlook his faults, and to know, with justice rather than mercy, that what he reaped in his children's opinion of him was the result of his own character. He would deserve their fear of him and their criticism.

VI

WHEN Alice waked it was to continuation of a mood of happiness that promised to become a state. By her lightness of heart, by her hope and eagerness for the day, she had gone back to the quality of well-being that was hers when she was Alice Speare. All the dark tragedy was washed clean of its bitterness this morning; she had begun again at that remote point of departure.

Before she had finished dressing, Rosalind arrived at her door hugging a celluloid duck on which there remained only faint traces of paint. Unlike its effect on the toy, Rosalind's morning bath had revived color

in her more intense than it had been the previous evening.

While the child lamented the sad change in the duck, Alice was observing her features and recognizing what she had missed before—a resemblance to Mr. Karanoff in the lift of her head and the upward flash of eyebrows now and then—an ever so faint suggestion of hauteur which in Rosalind added just the touch of contrast that gave her puppy-grace distinction. In Mr. Karanoff, and in less degree in Rosalind, a dynamic force had been released that in Mrs. Karanoff was still held static by her extreme sensitiveness.

With this distinction in mind, Alice was not prepared for Mr. Karanoff's breakfast gloom, nor his wife's gay whimsy. The meal was a family affair, including even Nico, whom Rosalind wanted close beside her in his carriage. The little girl ate as if her food were the very fuel of her radiance that poured itself out in baby antics at which her mother jested lovingly over her head, and the infant smiled himself into hiccoughs.

When Woodey had taken the children away from the table, Mrs. Karanoff turned to the governess with the suggestion that they discuss their program. "Last night Mr. Karanoff told you his ambitions for Rosalind as a woman of affairs," she began. "I too have my ambitions. I want her to begin now, this summer, to learn really how to *enjoy* the things of life that, rich or poor, we all may have for the taking. I want her to know enough of botany to distinguish one family from another in the plant world; I want her to know the trees

by name and their most obvious characteristics; I want her to know something about the stars so that they are more than just beautiful to her; geology, so that she can read the history of this ground in its shale and granite; and I want the truth about animals demonstrated to her, particularly that her own fear of them is her greatest danger from them. I know this can be made simple enough for her to catch a real glimmer of understanding this summer, and if you will make that your work here in the gardens and park I shall be very happy."

Through all that she said in the minor treble of her deliberate voice, she kept her eyes on Alice. Not once did she glance at Mr. Karanoff, who was listening in attentive silence.

"Rosalind has already begun to know, for I have taught her in kindergarten terms, that the loveliest things in the world are the possession of everybody. Our love for each other, this park which is open to anybody in White Falls who wants to enjoy it, the sky above and the earth beneath—these are our wealth."

To Alice her words came with the cadence of a psalm, and touched the crystal stillness as etchings of frost touch a windowpane; yet into that pattern Mr. Karanoff's voice broke mockingly, "Beautiful thought! Something—against a background of nothing!" He made a gesture of derision.

Mrs. Karanoff smiled faintly, and he rose from the table as if to end futile argument before it began. He said, staccato and without feeling, "From opposite

poles, Miss Speare, you have your instructions. Woman-like, you will, of course, do as you please."

"I think," Mrs. Karanoff said, as if he had not spoken, "that for these first few days you will just want to live with us and watch Rosalind, and in the meantime we'll send to Chicago for the textbooks you want."

Alice signified assent to that plan. She was wondering why Mr. Karanoff chose to quarrel with his wife's dream for the child. Did he think Rosalind couldn't be trained in both directions, beginning at any time? Alice promptly told him that she could, adding: "I find no disharmony in your ideas for her. Did you think I would?"

"I didn't," Mrs. Karanoff said, as if she knew her husband did. She was still smiling, her hand outstretched as an offering to him of peace and farewell.

He looked down at it, deliberating before he clasped the hand in both his own. Then he kissed his wife, and disappeared into the hall.

Mrs. Karanoff's eyes lingered in the direction he had taken, and not until she heard the door of his car slam shut did she turn to Alice; then she rose smiling in a way that Alice knew already to be peculiar to her, as if, mentally, she were continuing an interesting episode.

"Rosalind will be descending on us soon," she said absently. "It is an old promise that the first morning you were here she was to make an apple pie . . . out of cherries." Mrs. Karanoff laughed, her thought fo-

cusing on the child. "All pie is apple pie to her," she explained. "Don't correct her. She has never lisped or talked a baby jargon, but she mispronounces delightfully, and instead of setting her right the whole household accepts her words. At first Mr. Karanoff wanted her corrected, but gradually he has learned to enjoy her language, until he, more than he realizes, speaks it along with the rest of us. Long words are her delight."

Alice remembered that, the evening before, Rosalind had cried, "Now i'n't that just a puffectly abomi'ble shame?" when they had found a flower broken on its stem.

"You won't correct her?" Mrs. Karanoff said, and Alice promised gravely that she would not.

VII

ALTHOUGH it was hardly four o'clock when Alice and Rosalind returned from a drive around the lake that afternoon, they followed Mr. Karanoff's car into the *porte-cochère.*

As Alice watched him emerge from beneath the coupe's low top, she put a restraining hand on Rosalind, who would have sprung out to greet her father. Alice knew from the dark portent on his face that he would not welcome the joyous onslaught of the child, and Rosalind, warned, sank back into stillness, her eyes lifted inquiringly to her father's as he came to the door of his wife's car.

"Where is Mrs. Karanoff?" he asked Alice briefly.

"We took her to a house on the lake shore. I don't know whose, but she spoke of a board meeting. I seem to remember that she said the Children's Hospital."

"Yes, the Children's Ho'pital," Rosalind was crying, and her father nodded, accepting her word for it.

"The car is to call for her at five," Alice added.

Mr. Karanoff turned away, and Alice and Rosalind, subdued by his manner, followed him into the house. They saw him go to his study as, hand in hand, they went upstairs where Lucy took Rosalind in charge.

Alice was alone in her room to do as she pleased until dinner time, and she decided that she would enjoy writing a leisurely letter to Miss Belden after she was dressed for the evening. As she began her toilet, her attention was so arrested by the green and gold vista that opened before her windows that she paused to look down the long hill through plantings of dark firs and sunlit spaces of vivid lawn.

In some other upstairs room she could hear Nico crying; a moment later there was the sound of hastening feet, and then the sharp closing of a door that muted the baby's wailing.

Soon a stillness, tense for Alice with the strain she had seen on her employer's face, settled over the house; and for no reason that she could formulate she went to her door and locked it.

As soon as she had opened the faucets in her bathroom, however, the humming of water dispelled the slight feeling of gloom. But even though she lingered

in her tub, and dressed with care, she did not relax in leisure as she had planned to do, and when at five o'clock there was a sharp tapping on her door she jumped nervously.

Before she had turned the key in the lock she heard Mrs. Karanoff's voice saying softly, "It's I, Miss Speare," and felt her hand on the knob ready to turn it as soon as the key should release the bolt. An instant later she slipped into the room and stood against the door opposite Alice, who stared at the ghastly white of her face.

"Do you know why Mr. Karanoff sent for me?"

Her eyes, black as the pits of fear, dilated and contracted with her heartbeat. She must have run upstairs, past the study where naturally she would have looked for her husband, to this newest of her friends.

Alice was eager to answer her need. She made a persuasive gesture toward a chair, and Mrs. Karanoff followed her, taking off her hat as she listened.

"I didn't know he had sent for you. We came home at a little before four, and Mr. Karanoff's car was just ahead of us. I knew at once by his face that he was disturbed. He asked for you, and we told him the car was to call for you at five. I suppose he sent it for you. He carried a big brief case. It looked heavy. I saw him go into his study. That's all I know."

It was evident to Alice that Mrs. Karanoff had no idea how shockingly white she was. She sat on the edge of the chair gazing tensely before her.

"Peter said he seemed terribly upset about some-

thing, and sent for me to come. I might go down at once . . . and find him, but Nico needs me. I don't know which one needs me most." And still she made no move to find out which one needed her most.

With a flash of divination, Alice spoke. "Why don't you go to the baby, and let me tell Mr. Karanoff that you are here? I'll go down at once. This dressing gown is permitted, is it not?"

Instantly Mrs. Karanoff accepted the suggestion; the dressing gown was all right. . . .

When Alice returned up the broad flight she went to the nursery, making a conscious effort to walk with short, firm steps that the terrified—yes, terrified—woman who was listening might know it was she approaching.

Mrs. Karanoff was standing close beside Woodey with the baby in her arms. She had taken him naked from Woodey's lap and had flung a blanket around him, for the nurse seemed to have been interrupted in giving him his evening sponge. Both women were gazing at Alice with alert inquiry.

"Mr. Karanoff said he sent for you because he thought he might have to leave for Washington at once, but he has decided not to go. He said, 'Tell her it's the damned war. She'll know.' " She smiled as she finished to show that there was nothing to fear.

In the instant before Mrs. Karanoff bent and laid the baby in Woodey's lap, Alice saw her body relax and the lids droop over her frightened eyes. To make a return to the commonplace in an easing off of the acute

situation, Alice went into the room and, stooping beside Woodey, watched the progress of the bath. Mrs. Karanoff was moving slowly about the room setting a few things to rights as if she could hardly resist her need to sink down in exhaustion. She had said the baby needed her, and she was trying to keep to the fiction of it.

Alice did not see her again till just before dinner when, seeking, she found her in the great dining room rearranging a centerpiece of roses. She explained that when Mr. Karanoff was disturbed he preferred dinner in this room, which soothed him by its space, and because he was troubled about business to-night Mrs. Karanoff wanted to do all she could to please him.

She was dressed to please him too, it would seem, for her pale pink gown was sleeveless and she wore rubies; amazing rubies, uniquely disposed, that made her own beauty glow with warmth. There was a deeper glow, as well, of happiness—or was it relief?

"I came down early to see if you would let Rosalind and me have our dinner somewhere apart from you to-night," Alice said. "I expect such an arrangement permanently, or as often as it suits you; you know that."

"I want Rosalind and Mr. Karanoff to be together at dinner as a rule," she answered quickly, as if there were purpose behind the decree, "but there will be times. . . ." She did not finish the sentence.

"This is the night of the pie," Alice reminded her after a moment of silence. She was feeling trepidation

for the success of the surprise which meant so much to Rosalind.

Mrs. Karanoff's hand went to her lip. She had forgotten. After a moment of thought she said, troubled, "It's such a terrible pie! Dear little Rosalind. I've tried to prepare her for failure, but she is so happy about it. I doubt if I could persuade her to postpone it."

They stood gazing, not at each other but at the memory of Rosalind's creative struggle with flour and cherries. The child had wept with weariness finally, and yielded the last touches to her mother.

"Well. . . ." Mrs. Karanoff faced the probability with: "After all, I can't save them from each other. Rosalind must learn how to live with other peoples' moods, and Mr. Karanoff is not happy to-night." She turned back to the roses, and Alice, hearing Rosalind's voice on the terrace, went to bring her in to dinner, for Gray was filling the water glasses. When she returned with the child dancing beside her, Mr. and Mrs. Karanoff were standing at their places.

During the meal, Mr. Karanoff talked constantly about the war. His Canadian forests and lumber interests were being stripped of man power; his Russian government bonds threatened to become worthless. Every now and then Rosalind touched his hand with soft little pats of appeal, and tried to tell him there was a surprise for him, and though her mother and Alice gave her the smile of happy conspiracy it did not satisfy her.

As Gray was clearing the table for dessert, Mr.

Karanoff turned suddenly to Rosalind and demanded, "What's this s'prise you're fussing about?"

Instantly Rosalind's radiance was released. She wriggled in an ecstasy of anticipation. "Oh a s'prise for *you,* made by my own dear little hands!"

Alice and her mother, and Gray more discreetly, smiled at the naïveté.

"I made it for you, daddy," she went on, varying the theme, and finished, "maybe it's an apple pie and maybe it *isn't.* You guess!"

There was no time for guessing. The pie arrived in the reverent hands of Gray. In a silver server with silver handles like butterflies at the sides, it nevertheless was a sad, sad pie. Its edges, thick as the lips of an Ethiop; its broken top crust, its outcroppings of too abundant flour all marked it with the maker's inexperience, but she did not see it so. Gray had cut it into acute triangles, and he offered it to Mrs. Karanoff with the broad-bladed knife as if it were a confection from Olympus.

Mr. Karanoff's hand held Rosalind's on the tablecloth, but he was not thinking of her. His thought had gone back to Canada, to Russia, to war's greedy clutch on his affairs. When the pie reached him, he helped himself with rough deftness and began to eat before Rosalind had been served by Gray.

His first taste of the too sweet, too gummy, utterly tough portion on his plate reacted in a dislike which he took no pains to conceal. He pushed his plate from him with never a glance as Rosalind who was shining

at his left, a star of delight, and addressed his wife: "Terry, why in the world do you let this child do everything she wants to do? This is absurd. I refuse to play an infant's game at lying to please her. Rosalind," he turned to the child, whose radiance was quenched as effectually as if a gallon of water had been poured over her, "you are just a little, *little* girl and it isn't easy to make pie. The next time you want to cook you ask Miss Speare or Pablo to show you exactly how to boil an egg so that it is just right. Then I'll praise you, my dear, and be glad you want to cook."

Gray was at his side with strawberries, and he helped himself with the same rough deftness, seemingly unaware of the grief that had welled from the heart of Rosalind. Enormous tears made a pool of her eyes, brimmed on the lashes and hung there while the child's whole being reached toward her mother for solace. She had not moved, there was no outstretching of arms in baby appeal, only the silent cry of spirit to which her mother's spirit answered.

She sat motionless in her high-backed chair, glowing with color, smiling not only with understanding but with strength; offering with intense concentration more effective than words could possibly have been, a control that her eyes were telling Rosalind to take and use. Though the child's head and body were quivering with emotion she drank of that strength, her wet face lifted like the face of a dew-drenched rose that drinks of the sun which is its source.

Alice, watching the scene, put a hand to her aching

throat. She saw Rosalind answer her mother with a sunny smile that ended in a sob; and then, across the pearls of her little teeth there flashed the diamond of a falling tear.

The next instant she slid from her high chair and went to her mother, who received her into her lap. Heads close together, they discussed the pie, tasting, oh very daintily, the cherries that had climbed out upon the crust. Barely murmuring, so soft was her voice, Mrs. Karanoff said, "Most of it is a lovely brown Rosalind . . ." and Rosalind replied, "Yes, and sweet as sweet, like candy!"

After all, the matter ended with consideration of the pie's virtues.

VIII

BEFORE the coffee and liqueurs were brought in, Gray announced callers: "Mrs. Hamilton and Master Norris. . . ."

The man's formality was answered by the utmost informality of response. "Bring them in!" "Hello there, Clara, come on in and have dessert." The whole family rose, and immediately Mrs. Karanoff and Rosalind were at the door of the dining room receiving a very Juno of a woman and a straight slim little boy. Mr. Karanoff saluted them from his place, while Rosalind assisted her mother in the seemingly joyous business of introducing the two.

"This is our Clara . . . Mrs. Hamilton, an absentee member of this family, and this is Norris Field. With Clara it is 'love me, love my Norrie.'"

Rosalind was eagerly pulling Norris toward Alice; pushing when she was not pulling, though the boy was willing enough to be led. "See *Norrie!*" Rosalind shrilled, her face aquiver with happy excitement. Alice looked down into the child's clear eyes; at his sweet curved mouth and long dimpled chin. It was an oval chin, not shortened by the dimple, but long and sensitive rather.

As he gave his hand to Alice, sustaining the social moment with smiling amiability, Rosalind danced beside him, chubby against his slim leanness, and drummed with insistent little fists on his arm. "Catch me, Norrie, catch me!" she cried, then almost tripping over herself she tried to run and look back at the same time. Her eyes beckoned him on.

With a quick movement, Norris was after her, while the four who were about to reseat themselves watched and listened for the tumble that seemed inevitable.

There was the thud of small feet through the hall, their excited voices, then from the lawn shouting and squeals.

Alice listened to the sounds from out of doors while she watched the three candle-lit faces and the gleaming coffee cups that were lifted and lowered. Their talk had begun in the middle of interests common to them all.

"I moved out to the cabin last Wednesday," Mrs.

Hamilton was saying. "My garden was doing beautifully. . . ."

"Had Oleson been attending to it?" That from Mr. Karanoff.

"Yes. Everything was all right. Mrs. Oleson is going to 'do' for me. They'll be better than the Pratts."

"Much. They're better farmers all round."

"Why are you in town? Are you working at night?"

"I have to to-night. Not often, though. Usually I can be out at the cabin by four. I really came to meet Miss Speare." She turned to Alice, who thought her face typically Scotch with its clear gray-blue eyes under black brows, fresh cheeks, and the irradiation of humor that gave her mouth and chin an upward inflection.

"Miss MacRae is supervisor of nurses at the hospital." Mrs. Karanoff said.

"Mrs. Hamilton," her husband reminded her.

"Oh, yes. I'm sorry, Clara!" To Alice: "She so recently has become Mrs. Hamilton! They call her Miss MacRae at the hospital."

"Everybody may as well," Clara said. She was looking down into her tiny liqueur glass. "It is hardly sensible to expect people to remember . . . when there is no apparent change in my life."

This was not explained to Alice; nobody spoke just then, and in the silence Alice suddenly remembered with amazement at her stupidity.

Of course! This was the friend of whom Mrs. Karanoff had told her at intervals that morning while Rosalind made pie. Alice had been more interested in

the child than the story, and she had quite forgotten the several names of the young woman who had so recently acquired a romance. And Norris was the son of the Dr. Field Miss MacRae had loved for many years. The doctor was chief of staff at the hospital; his new wife whom he had married suddenly last Christmas was Miss MacRae's long time rival!

As Alice recalled the tale she could see Rosalind's frenzied efforts with dough and Pablo's pale face and tiny eyes. "Look," Rosalind had cried, "Pablo looks like pie, mother." As indeed Pablo did. . . . Why should she have cared about the tale of a strange girl called Lyda Wayne and another called Clara when Rosalind was so vitally before her? Now with Clara before her she wanted to remember.

When Dr. Field had married the wrong woman, the one who was "utterly lacking in the maternal," as Mrs. Karanoff had said, Clara had been heartbroken and chagrined, and she had gone away to travel for several months. She had traveled slowly, stopping in the big cities to nurse a few cases to earn her way. Then in Los Angeles she had married a patient after nursing him a month—married him because she really loved him tremendously and thought he was going to get well. He was a bachelor, a business man. . . . Mrs. Karanoff had emphasized the suitability of the match; even, she had said, he was "big enough" for Clara, broader of frame and tall "like Nicolai." He had collapsed suddenly and there had been a death-bed wedding ceremony.

And now evidently this bereft lady was living somewhere in a cabin near a farmer named Oleson.

The others were talking about the children.

"Shall we find the little scamps?" Mrs. Karanoff rose and moved ahead of the others. "I'll leave you two to get acquainted," she said over her shoulder, and quickened her steps.

When they saw her next she was gently trying to restrain Rosalind, who pleaded to have Norris chase her again. She had rolled down the bank; there were green stains on her dress and ferns in her hair. Norris was saying fondly, "She began to cry, but I made her laugh instead." Both children were taken into the house and for an hour Alice and the nurse sat on the terrace, talking—friends, it seemed, from the beginning—while indoors Mrs. Karanoff read to the children.

When at eight o'clock Clara went in to get Norris, Rosalind set up a pleading for his return the next day. "Please, moth-er. I *need* a child to play with."

Mrs. Karanoff said softly, "Hush, darling." And Norris: "I could be here by a quarter to four. . . ." A remark urgently offered that Mrs. Karanoff ignored. Clara said, holding out her hand to the boy, "Rosalind does need some one to play with. It's too bad. . . ."

As the two were about to go out the great door on the street side of the house, Mrs. Karanoff detained them. "Oh, Clara! Wait. Nicolai wants me to go to Chicago with him Tuesday. He's to get the *Russia* out of dry dock. Of course I have to take Woodey and the baby wherever I go. I was wondering if you'd stay

here at night with Miss Speare and Rosalind. Could the cabin spare you?"

The nurse and the governess exchanged a quick look, and both smiled. "I think the cabin can spare me. Yes. . . ."

"And bring Norrie," Rosalind cried.

"Darling, no. Be still, dear. . . ."

When she had closed the great door Mrs. Karanoff began to talk about Clara with enthusiasm. "She is so sensible; so brave. She lives out on the shore in summer in the little cabin that was the original farm house on this land. You must go out and see her soon. It really is important for you two to be friends. Nobody in White Falls knows us as well as Clara. I think other people may gossip . . . some . . . about us, but not Clara. She knows the truth about us; she'll tell you some day and you must listen; perhaps during the long evenings while we are gone."

Mr. Karanoff came out of his study. He approached Rosalind, who, remembering his reception of her pie, shrank shyly against her mother.

"Rosalind. . . ." He stooped and gathered the sleepy child into his arms. "We must make peace, you and I. That was a terrible pie, my darling, but you tried to make it right, I know." He was walking slowly toward the stairs, carrying her, taking her up to Lucy. "I'm going to bring you something from Chicago next week, on the *Russia*. A little pony and a governess cart. We need one, don't we, now that we have Miss Speare?"

His voice was low; his lips brushed Rosalind's cheek.

Magnetism flowed from him in reaction from his temper, and Alice, feeling the charm of him, wondered why Mrs. Karanoff should have such fear of him as she had exhibited in the afternoon. Surely anyone could see that, even though the man was moody, he was firmly rooted in love of his little family.

IX

DURING several of those long evenings, Norris and Rosalind played in the gardens or near the lake. Alice was uneasy at first about the boy's frequent visits; for some obscure reason Mrs. Karanoff had not encouraged them. Since Clara seemed serenely unaware of any distinction against him, however, she could not possibly suggest that Norris was unwelcome, and as his behavior was so above criticism Alice herself could find only pleasure in his presence.

His manner toward Rosalind was usually one of extreme amusement. He laughed at her antics, and she, playing to so stimulating a companion, was an animated little rogue. He allowed her to dominate him, and she seemed to know instinctively that she must occasionally make a swift transition from playfulness to dependent femininity, a mood to which he responded with radiant chivalry.

It was a week before the *Russia* arrived, and toward the end of that time, which reached over into July, Alice heard Clara's version of the gossip she wanted to antici-

pate, and to which Mrs. Karanoff had said she hoped Alice would listen.

"When Mrs. Karanoff returns," Clara had begun earnestly, honest eyes searching Alice's for a hint of possible criticism, "she will ask me, not directly, but by a subtle language she speaks, if you know the truth of all these things I shall tell you; and of course I shall let her know that you do. She will be relieved, because she will know that between you and her there is an understanding. She will not be thinking 'Alice is mystified about us,' or 'Alice is distressed' but—'Alice knows.' For Rosalind's sake, you and she must be in sympathy and also, she knows, that if you are in sympathy with her you will see the best in her husband. She wants that especially."

"I do see it now!" Alice was aware of more conviction in her tone than there was in her spirit at the moment. She dreaded what she was about to hear, for the fact that Mrs. Karanoff had been anxious for her to have the truth, and had arranged a time for the telling of it, was in itself portentous.

As if she felt the sinking of Alice's heart in her own sympathetic breast, Clara continued: "This probably makes you feel rather awful, but it needn't. It proves that both Mr. and Mrs. Karanoff like you very much and believe you are the right governess for Rosalind. If they did not they wouldn't care so much whether you knew the truth of these stories or not; they'd leave it to chance.

"Mr. Karanoff used to give everybody and anybody

all the material for gossip they could possibly use. There are any number of stories about him that might, or might not, be true; I don't know. He didn't care himself until after he fell in love with his wife and saw how near one of the tales came to breaking her. Everything about her that makes your heart ache for her—that wistful sadness, the white in her hair—began with a thing he did a few months before Rosalind was born. He was bored here and went to Europe—not alone."

Not alone. The deliberation with which Clara said the two words, following a pause to give them significance, sent a chill of desolation through Alice's nerves. Her imagination seized, not upon Mr. Karanoff and his companion in diverting scenes, but upon his wife, alone and unhappy during long wearing days and tear-drowned nights which, at last, had been gloriously transmuted into the radiance and laughter that were Rosalind. The interchanging *penseroso* and *allegro* of the situation—the *penseroso* and *allegro* of all life—smote her as sheer beauty, such vital beauty as was concentrated in the trinity that was Rosalind.

Clara continued, with careful choosing of words, at times with little impulsive bursts of exasperation, to sketch the drama of a marriage to which the young dancer had taken a girl's illusions, and Mr. Karanoff had taken an ambition to establish a family.

There had been trouble the first year because there was no promise of an heir. Mr. Karanoff had not married for love, and quite naturally he had not been amiable in that particular disappointment. But Clara

did not dwell on that phase of their unhappiness. She had not known more than that Mr. Karanoff was in a temper.

It was his wife's development through the trouble that came later that particularly interested Clara. Ill as she was, desolate, needing the refuge of her own home, she had yet had the spirit and the courage to leave her husband's house when she knew of his infidelity. She had let her aunt and her mother hide her in a sanitarium. Nobody, not even Dr. Field who was her doctor, had known where she was. When Mr. Karanoff had returned he had realized that she was already almost lost to him, for she had signed a contract to return to the stage as leading woman to Conway George. She had really meant never to go back to Nicolai.

Clara had broken off to tell Alice, with wonder and exasperation both in her tone, that in the meantime, both before and after her husband went away, Mrs. Karanoff had had another problem on her hands. Dr. Field had been so unbelievably foolish as to fall in love with her. He had been successful as her physician; she had been extremely generous and helpful as a patron, and he had let himself get hopelessly infatuated. Even before Mr. Karanoff had gone away, it was evident to him that Dr. Field had quite lost his head. "She was afraid Nicolai would believe wrong of her," Clara said, "but he didn't, because it was so perfectly evident that she didn't want Dr. Field to love her. I have seen her when she seemed silently ordering him not to love her."

Alice remembered the moment at the dinner table

when she had seen Mrs. Karanoff, with never a word, but by her look and the intensity of her spirit, tell Rosalind not to cry, not to care, but to smile. It was not difficult to imagine how silently, yet unmistakably, she had ordered Dr. Field not to show his feeling for her.

"Nicolai—I give you my word for it," Clara's voice was continuing, "enjoyed watching her get rid of Dr. Field. I doubt if he ever spoke to her about it. He knew she loved him utterly, that Dr. Field hadn't a chance. His attitude was rather like a man who calmly watches his loyal little dog drive off an intruder. He just leaned back knowing Terry was his, and that she wouldn't endure another man's attentions."

For a while Clara forgot that she was telling Alice about the two Karanoffs. She knew the facts about them and had but to recite them; Dr. Field still eluded definition. Concerning him there were no facts, and Clara mused aloud about him. He still loved Mrs. Karanoff, she believed; the affair had changed and saddened him. . . . Several times during the five years he had seemed to be about to marry Lyda Wayne; always he had depended on and given his friendship to Clara, so that nobody really understood. Trying to understand him was like trying to understand the idioms of a strange language.

Clara had no blame for Mrs. Karanoff. She was just so upright in her virtue that she leaned backward. Nobody—nobody had ever rivaled her husband in her affections, and all her world knew it, so that she could afford to forget Dr. Field's unwelcome ardors, espe-

cially since he was married now to one of her own best friends. At least she should not make Norris share his father's banishment.

And having said that, Clara hastily explained that he was not banished exactly. He came there to the big social events; they appeared friendly enough, but there was a little gossip because Mrs. Karanoff had not entertained for them since their marriage; nor was he her doctor any more. They were employing a new man at the hospital, whom Mr. Karanoff had brought there as head of the children's department. That change was natural enough, perhaps—Clara passed over it to emphasize the fact that her concern lay with the gossip. If Mrs. Karanoff would behave now as if there were nothing to forget in Dr. Field's behavior, all would be well. And at once Clara made excuse for the very thing she deplored in her friend. Dr. Field had been married suddenly at Christmas, and as it happened to be at the time when the world knew Nico was coming, of course she hadn't entertained then nor since, but Norris, such a dear little boy. . . . For Mrs. Karanoff's own sake Clara brought Norris to play with Rosalind because she knew that there would be no talk at all if Mrs. Karanoff would be more gracious toward the Field family.

Clara's troubled voice ceased its musing and the two sat quiet, holding between them the blurred pattern of a subtle mystery. There was, as yet, less concerning Mr. Karanoff's indiscretions than Alice had expected. She was glad of that, because she liked him and wanted to

believe that his faults were no more than the usual backwash of his virtues. He was aggressive, independent and fearless. Such spirits shied away from life's harness long enough to know that to run unbridled is to run amuck, but given time they usually came to the point of admitting that the bit and halter were for their good. As such he was interesting and not a little pathetic. She could not believe that his wife still suffered over that lapse. She had returned to him; she had given him Nico.

Alice closed her eyes that she might more sensitively feel and hear the stirring sweetness of the night. They were sitting on a stone bench on the rustic stair-landing halfway down to the lake. The brook that meandered through the woods chattered into a little waterfall just behind them, and two trees that Mrs. Karanoff had named, one Siesta because its branches drooped sleepily, the other Aspiration because its leafy arms were lifted, rustled above them in a freshening breeze that came whispering from the lake.

This loveliness was Mr. Karanoff's gift to them just as the park that swept about them was his gift to his gossiping townfolk; above them rose the still beauty of the house that his dreams had created, with its spirit of kindliness to which he contributed. On Monday, workmen would come to tear off the roof of the ballroom for the building of the children's suite that was an expression of his love. There was so much evidence of good in the man that Alice's sense of justice rebelled against the raking over of the dead embers of his past.

Clara sighed and began in a brighter tone: "I didn't intend to talk about Dr. Field so much. I was going to tell you a quite different story about the time after Rosalind was born when Mr. Karanoff went to see his wife in New York. He hadn't even known the date his child was born until she was two weeks old, but they finally wrote that he might come."

Clara laughed and her voice softened fondly. "Poor man! He thought he could do as he pleased, and not pay. He thought, because his wife had dealt with Dr. Field in such righteous loyalty, that he could play fast and loose with that affection of hers, but she taught him differently! He began to love her when she defied him. He saw that she had character—passion and courage—and the minute he was convinced of it, his slavery began.

"He went to New York and saw her. She told me herself that she wouldn't have believed that he would be able to persuade her to return to him. She was steeled to hold out against him though the heavens fell, but she hadn't realized that he would come there pleading his need for her.

"Interesting, isn't it, how women are like that? I don't believe that old saw about a woman, a dog and a walnut tree, but I do know that nothing is so difficult to kill as the love of women for the men who need them. Nicolai really did love her, at last, and he wanted her. She had always loved him, but not maternally until that day."

The words shocked Alice into a realization that

poured like light upon her own case. George Hodson hadn't needed her. She had needed him so much, so wholly, in her desolation that the balance between them had been upset. If he had needed her in like degree what would have become of the ideal to which their love had been sacrificed?

X

CLARA told the story with more than a hint as to their mutual happiness in reunion. There had been ecstasy; but it had hurt. Alice could feel how keenly it must have hurt Mrs. Karanoff, and perhaps it had hurt him too. Perhaps his regret for the one who had come between them was sharper than her painful resentment; anyway, when Gus Samuels, her manager who was putting her on in the new play with Conway George, tried to make her reconsider her promise to her husband they both found how absolutely they belonged to each other. Nothing, nothing could have come between them then, and yet, something did come between them—a ghost from his past that Mr. Karanoff had thought laid—came stalking out of the dimness, not to separate them but to walk with them.

"I don't believe he was guilty of the worst charge," Clara cried. "He told me the whole story himself, and I don't doubt his word, for he isn't a liar whatever else he is; and yet whether he was guilty or not, the thing lives in that house, day and night, with poor tormented

little Terry. Can't you see that she's chained to a ghost? That she never walks alone?"

Alice had seen. The roots of her hair were cold with the memory of her glimpse at that haunting presence, whatever it was.

"Yes, I know she's afraid of him!" Alice whispered, "I *have* seen it."

"No!" Clara's voice was imperative. "Not that. She isn't afraid *of* him. She's afraid *for* him. She's in constant fear for his life." Again Clara emphasized the distinction. "She expects a sword to fall at any minute, and the least evidence of perturbation in him rings every alarm bell in her nerves. And there's another angle to the thing—she hates his money—with reason. In that he isn't guiltless."

Clara had been choosing her words with exceeding care up to this time, but she poured out the story of Nicolai, and Alice, listening intently, saw him as he must have looked when he came to America. He was twenty-one and not in any sense an ignorant immigrant. He had been educated mostly in England by his father, who was pure Slav, and though he was the illegitimate son of a Russian Jewess he was proud and bitter rather than humble.

His first business associates in the new country were Russian Jews, who welcomed him because he spoke English. Nicolai would not take a job; he would work for nobody but himself, and so his first venture in finance was as a broker of junk that he bought from small dealers and redistributed.

Among other things he sent paper and rags to a paper mill in Massachusetts; soon he became interested in paper making and was frequently at the mill where he made the acquaintance of Abe Cetkowski, a Russian Jew, lonely and distrusting everybody, including his own nephew, who had come to America with him. Nicolai was told that Cetkowski was secretly at work on an invention that seemed to hold the germ of a revolutionary idea in paper making, and because of that Nicolai set himself to win the inventor's confidence. The old man never really trusted him, he said; never quite liked him, but Nicolai was a compatriot who had all the qualifications the old man lacked, and because he needed Nicolai's talents so badly, he finally showed him the invention which had come to a deadlock.

Nicolai went to work and made it a practical thing on the understanding that they should share royalties if Nicolai took out the patents and interested capital for its manufacture and sale.

To expedite matters, Nicolai went to Washington for the patent rights, and when he returned some time later with the patents all secure and the promise of capital, the old inventor discovered that Nicolai had transacted the whole business in his own name and that nowhere in the papers was the inventor's name mentioned.

There was a terrible quarrel. Cetkowski attacked Nicolai and would certainly have killed him if Nicolai hadn't been too strong for him. A workman who witnessed the scene testified later that Nicolai could have

killed Cetkowski in self-defense if he had wanted to. Instead he held him down while he explained that under their agreement to share profits the name in which the patents were taken made no difference, and Karanoff was an easy name for American business men to remember.

. . . Anyway, the next morning Cetkowski was found dead under the mill wheel. The nephew and Nicolai were arrested, and though sentiment was against Nicolai, his guilt could not be proved. The coroner's jury returned a verdict of death by accident.

The nephew was the old man's sole heir, and yet he hadn't a thing to show his uncle's equity in the invention. Nicolai laughed at him; snapped his fingers at him and public opinion and everything else, and proceeded to get rich before he was thirty. He seemed never even to have worried because the nephew swore vengeance against him and vowed a vow that he would "get" him if it took his whole life.

"If Terry had heard that story as I have told it to you," Clara said, "I don't think it would have shocked her, but it was given to her in a terrible way. Her stage manager couldn't believe she wanted to return to her husband. His idea of kindness was to help her break with Nicolai, get a big alimony and make a success of the stage; so he told her bluntly that it was time she knew what he had known about Nicolai for several years—that Nicolai had stolen an invention from an old man, had murdered him, cheated his heir, and that not only was his whole fortune built on that trinity of

crimes, but the murdered man's heir was out for revenge.

"Terry had been so ill and so emotionally harried for several months that the shock was one thing more than she could endure. She went down as if she had been clubbed. They sent for Nicolai, and Nicolai sent for me. . . ." Clara stopped, remembering much that she could not tell. "You can imagine how changed I found her! She has never recovered. You know perhaps what a phobia is. That nephew and the revenge he means to take on Nicolai are her phobia, I believe. She can't speak of it, but we know. When Nicolai comes home from the office or from trips away, watch her as he approaches. Her illness comes on suddenly; her features look strained as if she had been running and her color changes. Then, when he greets her, if all seems well with him, the illness passes almost as suddenly as it came.

"And you can see, can't you, how she feels about his money? She couldn't bear the thought that it belonged to the nephew, and to soothe her Nicolai is advertising and employing detectives to find the nephew; he has promised her he will pay back a reasonable percentage, and I believe he will, but not because his conscience hurts him, of course. He would do it for her sake, her peace of mind."

Clara had finished. Her voice set its period, and she lifted her face to the night. "That is all," she said, for Alice had not stirred. "There is nothing else that matters save that you understand and let her feel your un-

derstanding. Well as I know her, she and I have never discussed this thing. I don't know whether she talks freely to her husband or not, but he knows she loves him so much that she shares his guilt. Literally she does; you will feel that she is feeling guilt because this money, rolling in here, belongs to a man who never had it."

XI

ALICE waked the next morning, which was Sunday, saying as if in continuation of a thought she had been revolving in her sleep, "Afraid *for* him, not *of* him. If I were afraid for a man I loved I would go to him when I thought he was in danger. She stayed away from him that day. . . ."

The history of the house of Karanoff was neither better nor worse than she had expected it to be; it was different. She was relieved that, in the summer sunshine, the problem as it affected her seemed to call only for understanding and faith; and she was humble, because she remembered that she had so recently assumed that Mrs. Karanoff would find an erring husband light grief indeed when he was weighed against her own sorrow!

The case really was pathological rather than ethical. Whatever had been wrong in the past was being righted now; and so it was merely kindly consideration for the

mental illness at work in Mrs. Karanoff that need concern Alice.

Her mood was hopeful, and the radiant day heightened her delight in the ever new wonders of the small Rosalind, who, in her mother's absence, was carrying the dual rôle of entertaining hostess and model pupil.

It was in recognition of this highly virtuous behavior that Alice accepted an invitation for Rosalind to go to tea at Dr. Field's apartment that afternoon. Not with tact, but with vivaciously expressed cordiality, Mrs. Field delivered the invitation in person. Norris, she said, had had such *quantities* of cookies and milk with Rosalind during the week that she felt *obligated!* She wanted Alice and Clara to come too, of course, and they must not by *any* chance lose Rosalind *on the way* or Norris would be very much disappointed.

Rosalind stood between them, alight with eagerness. She lifted a rapt face to Alice, who quickly assured her that she might go. She was a good child; such a really wonderfully good child that she deserved a tea party. Alice explained this to Mrs. Field, and they smiled fondly over Rosalind's sunny head.

Accordingly the three set forth at the proper moment, Rosalind fresh from combat with sleep which she had vanquished from the usual place of honor in her siesta, and as sparklingly fresh as if the dews of a long and dreamless slumber were upon her.

When they arrived at Dr. Field's apartment, they found a large old-fashioned suite that had been designed when the White Falls apartment builders had

thought in terms of rooms rather than cubicles, yet it was decorated and furnished in a manner so utterly modern that it perfectly expressed the personality of the gay Lyda. She was reading aloud to Norris when they arrived, creating a pretty mother-and-son scene that was not borne out by the treatment of the rooms, which showed no slightest evidence of a boy's presence in the family.

In her afternoon dress, suitable to the heat of the day, Mrs. Field proved to be a decidedly pretty blonde, conscious of the beauty of her even white teeth, which she showed by little tricks of manner in her speech. She talked constantly, and flitted from one conversational twig to another with the ease of a bird in a berry bush.

Tea was served on the wide screened porch among the branches of maple trees, before Dr. Field had returned from the hospital. His wife, shrugging, said of him, "My husband will have to take his luck when he comes. He assured me repeatedly that you would none of you want to come to tea; that Rosalind was not yet *out,* and that he was sure he could not be with us. But I said that if you didn't want to come you would not come; that if Rosalind received young men like Norris and gave them cookies and milk she must expect to be considered a *sub deb;* and that if he didn't come we wouldn't miss him. But he will come, won't he, Norris?"

Norris smiled with slight embarrassment. "I guess he will," he said. "He likes cake." He added, "And he likes Clara."

Clara, taken unaware, looked enormously pleased for a moment. Then she took cover by asking Mrs. Field what the doctor thought of Henry Ford's hospital. She had never talked with him about it; lately she had been considering the eight hour shift for nurses very carefully, she said, and it seemed to her that it wouldn't work. "You can't run a hospital, or a house either, for that matter, on a factory scheme."

Mrs. Field said, "Pooh!" and continued impatiently: "That's simply your old-fashioned British complex. A throwback. What hasn't been done can't be done." Her tone was lightly contemptuous. "If a nurse can stop at the end of twelve hours and turn the patient over to another nurse, she can quit at the end of eight hours. The fact is that you nurses and doctors adore your work; you want to slave long hours and you also want to complain."

Clara had lost interest in Mrs. Field's reply before she had finished. She had followed Rosalind's gaze, for the child had suspended operations on her bowl of bread and milk to gaze long at some one who was looking at her from the doorway. It was Dr. Field.

There were cries of surprise. Nobody had heard him arrive; nobody had known he was there at the door except Rosalind. Norris looked down into the street for his car; his wife challenged him as "pussyfoot," and he, when he had met Alice and spoken to Clara, explained absently, "I drove straight into the garage, and came up the backway."

He had not greeted Rosalind yet. When he bent above

her, silently offering his hand, she put her closed fist, that held the spoon at an oblique angle, on his palm and again looked up into his eyes as if she wondered at the wordless greeting of one who regarded her with such intent interest.

When he sat down near his wife and accepted a cup and plate from her, Alice tried to see him as he must look to Clara, who had lost him twice.

He did indeed have charm, as she had said, though it was not until she had regretted a close-clipped mustache and shell-rimmed glasses that Alice perceived the somber kindliness of his face, and the grace of his tall body with its rounded shoulders. His hair was darker than Norris's and sprinkled with gray, his chin was not dimpled, but the two were very much alike in coloring and build, though Norris was enough like Mrs. Field to be her own son.

"You had an emergency operation this afternoon, didn't you, dad?" Norris said, and when Dr. Field answered that he had, Norris looked so pleased with himself that Alice asked him how he had known.

Norris was delighted to have seemed a Sherlock Holmes. "I smell ether," he explained, "a fresh dose."

Rosalind was gazing over her empty bowl with an unblinking stare at the cake. One hand was spread against her small breast, and Alice, noticing Dr. Field's eyes on the hand, leaned forward to see if it needed attention; she saw that it was quite clean and prettily placed.

It occurred to her to wonder if Rosalind's gesture

might have reminded him in some way of her mother, for it was as her mother's child that Rosalind would interest him, of course; he would want to sense her allure again in her daughter.

Following Mr. Karanoff as a lover, it seemed to Alice that he must have been like moonlight after sunlight, for he was attractive chiefly by virtue of a passiveness, the absence of which in Mr. Karanoff was part of his magnetic challenge.

Norris observed his father's eyes on Rosalind, and began eagerly, fondly, to interpret the child. "Look, dad! She wants some cake, and she just sits and stares at it out of her big eyes." He rose and bent above Rosalind. "Here, Roz, let Norrie give you some. Say, 'If you please, Norrie.' "

Rosalind leaned back in her chair, alight with smiles. "Cake-cake-cake-cake-cake-cake-cake," she jabbered, with never a "please" or a "Norrie" to soften the demand, and instead of cake she was given an animated finger in the ribs.

"Say 'please,' " ordered Norris.

"Cake-cake-cake," cried Rosalind, inviting play.

Dr. Field rose and carried the plate of cake to Rosalind. "Here," he said. "None of the rest of us have to say please for cake! She was waiting for it to be passed; she wasn't demanding it. Will you have some cake, Rosalind?"

With both hands Rosalind helped herself to a large piece that Alice promptly cut in half, putting the surplus on her own plate.

"Take *that!*" cried Norris. "That's to remind you that you're just a little, little kid!"

Rosalind made startled survey of the cake situation, then without knowing why, she joined in the burst of laughter at her own expense, and began to eat the frosting from her cake as if it, and everything else, were highly amusing on this delightful occasion.

For the first time since he had come in, Dr. Field's mouth relaxed in a smile. He sat with one elbow on his chair arm, his hand screening his face from the light, and addressed Alice, questioning her quietly about Rosalind's first adventure into knowledge, while his eyes, narrowed by concentration, traveled back and forth from governess to child as if he were diagnosing as he listened.

When she had answered him fully, he was silent for a moment before he said, as if he knew some comment were expected: "She is well? You aren't crowding her in the matter of arithmetic?"

"How does she look?"

"Perfect. Perfectly well."

Alice untied Rosalind's bib and wiped her face and hands, drew her close and kissed her soft forehead. "I love her," she said earnestly. Their eyes met in a direct look. "Her health . . . her good shall always come before everything else with me." It was as if she were making a promise that he had asked of her. Dr. Field had leaned toward Rosalind. He offered his hand, and she gave him hers, but immediately she withdrew it as she skipped away to play with Norris.

A moment later he went into the living room to get his pipe and, as Alice's eyes followed him, she was remembering that Clara had said, "Trying to understand him is like trying to understand the idioms of a strange language."

XII

ALICE took Rosalind home as soon as possible after tea. She was not certain why she regretted that she had accepted the invitation, nor just how she might have refused to accept, but she knew that she would not delay in telling Mrs. Karanoff about the tea party.

And yet it was the evening after Mrs. Karanoff's arrival before she had opportunity to speak of it.

The *Russia,* dazzlingly white, brass-trimmed and red-funneled, had put into port early Wednesday morning, and Mrs. Karanoff had come off at once in a mood so radiant that the whole day had been filled with the light of her happiness. Alice had not seen her so during the ten days before she had gone away, and for the first time she could understand that before her marriage she might have been the type of girl who would succeed as a dancer.

She was gentle even in her exuberance; her amusement partook of pathos, but her heart was light that day, probably because Mr. Karanoff had been safe on the yacht where neither an enemy, nor news of an enemy, could reach him.

When Alice told her about Norris's frequent visits and the tea party, she listened in attentive silence, asking only when the story was finished, "Did you think Dr. Field was afraid we were crowding Rosalind? Did you carry any such thought away from that little talk?"

"No," said Alice positively. "I didn't."

"Did he . . . compliment Rosalind . . . think her pretty?"

"He didn't say so. I didn't think he needed to say so. I could see. . . . Well, Rosalind was the center of everything!"

Mrs. Karanoff said slowly, her eyes averted, "Norris's grandparents live in New Jersey; one of the Oranges. I had rather understood that he would spend his summers there, now that his father is married again. You see, that apartment isn't a home, not what Norris should have. It's all so . . . strange, so bewildering the way things have of going off at angles. Dr. Field has striven, wrestled, suffered to make a success of medicine in order that Norris might have the right kind of home. He has always wanted a large yard for him, a room with game tables and victrola so that Norris could have his friends in his own home. And now that he is married and can afford such a place, Mrs. Field won't have it! In an apartment she has less housekeeping care; they often dine out; she won't have Norris's 'rubbish' about because there isn't room for it, and when she wants a big house for entertaining she helps herself to her father's house. It is a beautiful place and

she can have it without any responsibility whenever she pleases to take it. If Dr. Field had married Clara. . . . But men usually pass by the modest, unselfish women, like Clara. Their stock is always low."

Alice asked: "Is Dr. Field unable to convince his wife that he wants a home?"

Mrs. Karanoff shook her head slightly as if to say she did not know. "I don't think he is weak, exactly, if that's what you mean. He has strength of a kind—the kind that yields where women are concerned because of a sort of chivalry that is fundamental in him. I don't really pretend to understand him. Did . . . you like him?"

"Yes. He does have charm. Isn't he the kind of man that women want to comfort? Don't they usually feel an impulse to stand between him and something that's troubling him and that he isn't resisting?"

"Yes. They do. That exactly expresses it." She was frowning, worriedly, as if she wanted to rouse him to resistance to whatever it was that hurt him. Ten days later when Norris did leave for a long visit with his grandparents in East Orange, Alice felt a certainty that Mrs. Karanoff's worried frown had, somehow, marked the beginning of that journey.

The boy did not come to The Towers again before he left, and Rosalind missed him. She wanted him to see her new pony, Jingle, and the shining cart. "Norrie would like him, mother. Norrie would ride with me 'round and 'round. Please, mother."

Her urgency won only a vague: "Sometime, Rosa-

lind." "Perhaps to-morrow, dear." And for Rosalind, who was not easily turned aside from a desire, that to-morrow came at the hour of Norris's departure. Mrs. Karanoff finally promised Rosalind that she and Alice might call for Norris with the cart and take him to his train. This they did, Rosalind "steering" Jingle herself as far as Dr. Field's house, where she handed the reins to Norris, who drove almost all the way to the station, a proud, happy little boy under the inscrutable eyes of his father, who, with the child's baggage, drove slowly beside the cart. At times he had to wait at the curb for Jingle to give him a handicap; when traffic was thin he turned in a big circle, but always he gave the children attentive admiration and understanding.

"Old man," he said affectionately, in parting from his son, "Dear old man. . . ." He kissed the boy, held him close and then reached out for Rosalind and drew her into their embrace. Their young eyes laughed happily at each other.

"You love children," Alice said to him.

"I do."

Alice liked his grave voice and eyes.

After Norris left, Rosalind did not want to return to The Towers. She needed, she said, to see Clara. She thought she ought to drive out to Clara's and 'sprise her; but Clara was not there to be surprised.

As they approached the old whitewashed cabin at Jingle's miniature pace, Alice saw it from a diminishing distance. It was set on a slope above the lake among oak

trees that had been trimmed high. The house—it had once been called that, and a family of eight children had been reared in it—was of the architecture of an old Southern cabin with a big-breasted, squat stone chimney to which it clung, in its incipient decrepitude, like a little old woman clinging to a stalwart son.

An ancient lilac, small sister to an elm, grew beside the cabin door, and there were clumps of lilies and peonies in the grass around the foundation.

It seemed to Alice as she stood back appraising it, to be so perfectly centered in its surroundings that the slope of hillside out of which it seemed to have grown must forever cherish it, or, if it passed away, that its vacant place must remain, like the discarded frame from which a great canvas has been removed, sacred to the treasure it has held. Some frontier carpenter, unaware of his genius perhaps, had decreed its proportions a century before, and decreed its quality to outlast the century.

Rosalind led Alice to the well at the north end of the house to draw water, and as they drank they looked out over the lake that lay, a living blue, shimmering with silver light within the chalice of the hills. Cloud shadows deepened the intense colors of water, field and forest, shifting and changing as they moved with slow majesty. In the foreground, a small garden was bordered by a mass of little dark fir trees that stood pointed and sturdy in the breeze like carven jade against the blue.

To reproduce this homestead among the birches near

the great house, and call it a guest house was Mrs. Karanoff's dream.

"I thought it was just an old hut until Clara showed me its possibilities," she said when they arrived home that afternoon. "Did you notice Clara's clever substitute for awnings? She hung cedar boughs over the upper halves of the windows and laced wire back and forth. And did Rosalind tell you how she does her washing in the lake? That's lots of fun; she puts on her bathing suit and gets in. And she stretches the sheets and bath towels so straight and tight on the line that they dry as smooth as they need to be; she uses them without ironing them. They smell of heaven!"

At dinner that evening she continued the same theme, detailing Clara's economic ideas with an earnestness that was an indication of some unsatisfied need in herself. "I used to think poverty meant cheapness; soiled finery. Clara doesn't allow herself to crave finery, cheap or expensive, any more than I allow myself to crave the crown jewels of Russia. She knows just how worthless it all is. Clara really lives, because she thinks and is independent. She makes a success of herself and everything she touches."

"In other words," Mr. Karanoff said, to end the homily, "she has common sense, ambition and health. She achieves."

"Do you call it common sense to be so wise?" his wife asked. "She has taught me so much I needed to know! She has cured me of the fear of poverty. I am

not afraid of poverty in the least now. I, too, can achieve through poverty if need be."

Mr. Karanoff made a joke of the very thought, but his wife insisted earnestly that she meant exactly that. To Alice she said, "He knows that I mean every word I say. I'm not afraid of poverty such as Clara's."

"If Clara had Rosalind and Nico in her calico cottage, just how beautiful would it all be?" Mr. Karanoff asked her, his eyes narrowed, a twist in his upper lip.

"It would be just as nice as it is now," she declared. "Clara would make room for the children's beds. She'd have it orderly, and it would be clean and fresh always. Clara would manage!"

"And what if Clara's health were like yours—minus? Blue shadows under her eyes, and tears of weariness at the end of a pampered day?" His voice thrust the questions as if they were important, as if they were strong parries in a quarrel.

Mrs. Karanoff answered him with passion, meticulously, while Alice marveled that these ideas of cleanly, decent poverty were new to her; she seemed to think they had originated with Clara. And she marveled at Mr. Karanoff's very evident trepidation, for her newly-acquired conviction seemed also to be a threat she held over her husband, one that his love feared as a parent fears a child's first eager independence. "I would never stay in a city if I were poor. I would go to a village and live on the edge, where I would have beautiful country and a garden. If I was cold in winter, I would at least have clean snow about my little house. I would

forget that there are pampered women, and I would grow strong again. I was strong when I married you, Nici! I suppose we all have stories we live, ourselves at the center of them. I do, and one story is of Rosalind and me, alone and very poor. We . . ."

"Where's Nico; where am I in your story?"

"I don't know. It's a story that begins in the middle, and my first panicky thought is always that poverty is going to deny Rosalind everything she ought to have, and then I begin like the Swiss Family Robinson and take all the loveliness and all the fundamentals right out of the air for Rosalind."

"You'd take colds out of the air, and blizzards and sunstroke if you didn't have proper protection."

"I *would* have proper protection! That's the point. It would be proper, even if it wasn't what it is now."

"You had that kind of protection when I met you, but you weren't idealizing it for yourself; why think of it wistfully for Rosalind?"

"The thing I want for Rosalind, and that she is going to have, is freedom from the fear of poverty. I mean it, Nicolai, when I say that I am not afraid any more, either for myself or for Rosalind."

"You have said so before."

She had raised deep eyes to her husband's; her look held steadily until his dropped. "When we conquer a fear we glory in it, I suppose," she said, including Alice in her glance.

XIII

FOR several days the house echoed with the hammers of the carpenters who were erecting the framework for Nico's suite. Hollow tile and old faded Spanish tile, shipped from Cuba for the roof, were piled on the lawn.

The architect, Jay Cummerer, who had been expected for some time, arrived from Chicago ready, he said, when Mrs. Karanoff received him, for combat.

Alice had put Rosalind to bed for her nap, and had settled herself on the terrace as far from the building racket as possible with a basket of mending in the swing beside her.

She smiled in sympathy with the tone of the conversation, and let her eyes linger admiringly on the stranger who had laid his brief case on a wrought iron table. He was of good height and figure with heavy shoulders and a large head. His collar was very high, his hair thick and rather longer than was fashionable at the moment, yet it was highly becoming to him. Alice thought she had never seen more flattering eyes than his. She realized that this was the first time she had seen Mrs. Karanoff opposite any man other than her husband, and wondered if the architect's delightfully admiring manner and expression were usual with him, or inspired by the charm of his hostess. Would he look at her that way?

"Mr. Karanoff explained that we are going to give

you a cabin on the *Russia* while you are here, did he not?" she was asking.

Mr. Cummerer turned to look at the ship, lying at anchor. "Yes. That is very fine indeed of you. It will be delightfully convenient. If Mr. Karanoff presses me too hard I can end it all in the lake—very neatly.

"How about this table for our plans?" he asked. "I see the addition is coming along very well. It is the guest house that you and I must consider." He indicated a chair for Mrs. Karanoff, and himself bent above her and the plans, his hands resting on the table.

Mrs. Karanoff was looking at the blue print. Her silence held resistance to something she saw so that Alice could almost hear the gentle hesitating tone with which she would begin to make her wishes known.

"Did you draw this plan yourself for the guest house?" she asked at last.

"Yes, save for a few details." He began to enumerate the details, but Mrs. Karanoff stopped him.

"In Chicago, you remember, I told you I especially wanted the guest house like the sketch I left with you. Did you misunderstand me?"

Mr. Cummerer ran his fingers through the thick hair on the back of his head. He was looking intently into the upturned face.

"Mrs. Karanoff! I didn't suppose. . . . That day when you left the sketch with me, I thought Mr. Karanoff had quite overruled you. He brushed your idea aside. I thought you . . . er, accepted his decision."

"No. I didn't. I really want the guest house to be as

I told you. I supposed you realized that I was very much in earnest."

"I did think you were at the time. But Mr. Karanoff. . . . I'm afraid I didn't keep your plan."

He had seated himself in one of the stiff little iron chairs; his back was toward Alice, but she saw him nod as Mrs. Karanoff's beautiful cool voice, treble and minor both, repeated with deliberate enunciation the ideas she had supposed he had accepted as his working plan. "Mr. Karanoff," she began, "is usually willing I should do as I please in such things as this, and he has given me no reason to believe that he will not have the guest house according to my plan. His choice is for the Moorish, naturally, because the big house is Moorish. . . .

"I want the guest house and the new rooms in the addition to be as simple, as plain as it is possible to make them. The addition is a nursery for my little children, and I have reasons for wanting them in surroundings that have no least suggestion of elegance, of splendor. I want their atmosphere to be so humble that they will be as much at home on rag carpets as on Persian rugs. You see, this is not a matter of architecture or decoration with me; it is a principle.

"And the guest house: it is to be like the old original farmhouse that was here on this land . . . whitewashed logs and a stone chimney. I want it to be more than a guest house. It is to have a little kitchen where the children can live close to the realities. Rosalind is to cook here, and wash things. I mean to see that they

have the happiness of doing those things well." She paused and waited for Mr. Cummerer to speak.

He said at last, "I understand your point. I . . . I admire you for it. But Mr. Karanoff's ideas are so emphatically different!" His tone changed, and he reached for paper on which he began to sketch as he said, "Let's get to work and put your ideas into shape, so that we can submit them to him to-night."

He did not see the white flame that leaped in Mrs. Karanoff's eyes. He was bent above his drawing, and when she spoke he lifted his head in surprise at her tone. "Mr. Karanoff will agree to these ideas or the building will stop. I shall give my children the environment I think right for them."

The heat of her temper seemed not so much obstinacy as intensity of desire. She continued, her head lifted, her eyes bright with moisture. "I would give this house—The Towers—to White Falls for a museum, if I had my way, and go to live in a typical American house built for living, not for show. Mr. Karanoff cannot do that, and so I compromise, and I think in the end the compromise will have proven the very best way: the children shall live in their museum and learn its exact value, but they shall also have cottage life and learn its value."

"You don't admire this house?" The architect leaned back as he looked up at the face of the building with its square battlemented towers and the jutting eaves of old tile, bleached to a silvery rose.

"Admire it? I *love* it! I love it so much that there was

a time when I thought I couldn't be happy outside it, but I found that one may become so accustomed to rare things that they cease to have a significance. That is a loss, isn't it? And yet they may become so much a habit that the absence of them makes one uncomfortable."

The architect rose, and rummaged in his brief case. His smile broke over his face once more as he turned to Mrs. Karanoff with his attentive manner that suggested an established bond. "We'll make the log cabin a Puritan's dream. You don't object to its being beautiful, do you? Proportions?"

Mrs. Karanoff smiled, and all the youth and sweetness of her face shone out. "You have the idea now. Of course I want it beautiful; you see, there *was* combat."

"Was!" He had begun to draw again. "Is going to be. Mr. Karanoff! When he comes home to a pioneer cabin, American style."

"Not extreme. Not an affectation," she warned.

When Rosalind waked, Alice took her down to the shore for a lesson in number work with pebbles for counters, and when they returned to the terrace Mr. Cummerer was still bent above the table with Mrs. Karanoff at his elbow.

"Rosalind," he said, without looking up, "if you want to marry the village blacksmith and be disowned by your father, you can go ahead. You're going to have a B.A. degree as a washerwoman and cook."

Mrs. Karanoff turned a smiling face to the child, but immediately her eyes leaped beyond Rosalind, di-

lated and then contracted as a wave of pallor swept her face. Her nostrils quivered with the drawing of a quick breath, and she rose to walk to one of the flower urns that edged the terrace.

As on the afternoon when Mr. Karanoff had sent the car for her, she was evidently in the grip of a sudden terror, and her movement toward the flowers seemed to Alice to be the actualization of a plan, long premeditated—an act that, she thought, would cover the signs of agitation in her.

Mr. Karanoff was crossing the lawn. His gaze was dark with frowning, and fixed on Rosalind, who had run to meet him.

"These ferns . . . look sick," Mrs. Karanoff was saying as if she were repeating a formula. She was not looking at the flowers. Had she done so, she would have seen that there were no ferns in that particular urn. Her fingers pulled at a leaf that was not withered; it tore, but she did not see. Her lifted eyes were observing the meeting on the lawn, and Mr. Cummerer was observing her.

"I am afraid you will fall down those steps if you run so fast, Rosalind," Mr. Karanoff said. He bent above the child to receive her proffered kiss, and impulsively picked her up in his arms. "I don't want this dear little head all hurt." He kissed the dear little head, and moved forward slowly, carrying Rosalind. A faint suffusion of pink tinged the pallor of Mrs. Karanoff's face, and her eyes closed for a moment to open, smiling and brimming with tears that she blinked away.

She turned from the urn and waited in repose, until the two were beside her.

"All happy?" she asked her husband.

"So-so." He kissed her, a kiss that began affectionately and was arrested midway by a glance at the architect's sketch. He had seen it over his wife's head.

Mrs. Karanoff put her hands over his eyes. "After dinner, Nici," she advised persuasively. "You'll like it better if you have a shower and some food first."

Almost before she had finished the sentence, Mr. Karanoff had seized upon the idea. "Cummerer, let's have a swim! I dare you. That water's devilishly cold, but it renews your youth."

Mr. Cummerer rose, shifted his sketches into order and weighted them with his brief case while he answered in his rapid, jesting way: "Anything I can do to prime you for the after dinner interview. . . ." He gave Mrs. Karanoff a glance, extravagant with meaning, that finished the sentence for him.

XIV

AS Mrs. Karanoff had hoped, the swim and dinner put her husband into an indulgent mood, and he heard the plans for the cabin with cynical amusement.

"She thinks," he said to Cummerer, as he put an arm about his wife's shoulders, "that when I go away, she will bundle the children down the hill to that hut where they will live the cottage life for the good of their

souls!" He looked into his wife's face with fond amusement. "Promise me, for the sake of our guests, that you won't insist on corn husk mattresses, and that you'll have the bathroom *inside* the place."

"Nici . . . " His wife reproved him lightly and turned to Mr. Cummerer with the suggestion that they all visit the chasm the next day to choose the right stone and logs for the cabin.

"The river there flows between walls of gray stone, and it is as black as the Styx because of the chemicals poured into it from the mill," she explained. "It mirrors color perfectly—the rocks and the blue sky; even little flowers growing in crevices of the stone. You can imagine how they would look reflected in black, like color mosaics in polished onyx. I shall love showing it all to you!"

Mr. Karanoff said they need not include him in any picnic plans, and went in to his study. A few minutes later his secretary, in fresh white flannels and with wet plastered hair, appeared at the terrace steps. As Mrs. Karanoff received him, he murmured that he was expected, and went into the house.

"Evidently my husband is engaged for the evening! I didn't know. . . ." She seemed disappointed.

"Then let us go out on the lake, or to walk. This night is going to be a jewel. . . ." His bright, ardent eyes were on his hostess, who had turned to look through the trees at the darkening water.

It was dusk. Alice, with Rosalind in her lap, was finishing a story about the quail which they could hear

calling, "Bob *White*—Bob *White*—" She paused to listen, and when Rosalind stirred she said softly. "Tomorrow evening we'll hunt for some sweet white clover, and I will show you how its leaves make a compass after sunset. One little leaf will point straight north; and one to northeast and one to northwest." But Rosalind was listening for the bird's call to which Alice had given meaning, and Alice was hearing the urgent voice on the terrace.

Without interrupting the two for Rosalind's usual good night, she took the little girl in to bed, and then sat at the window of her own room to watch the dusk deepen from purple to the blue of night. The pine trees were as black as shadows on the lawn; the slim birches stood like white candles in the dimness, waiting to be lighted. Stars brightened as she watched, and high in the north she saw the beacon of Polaris. Below, in the fields and along the roadways, the sweet clover was pointing to the pole.

Rosalind, like the love personified that she was, accepted the nature lessons as simply as she accepted food, and returned that knowledge in a prattle enriched by her own imagination. She could tell delightful little stories of the stars, the trees, the shrubbery around the house. She had led her father one evening to the only chestnut tree in the grounds, and had shown him other identification marks than its full-flowered tassels—the deep canoes in the bark and the sharp pointed hooks on the leaves. He had been delighted with the small lore and the fact that she had actually taught him something

he had never known or observed. He praised her and Miss Speare quite as if he had not once scoffed at the idea of botany as part of his child's curriculum. He listened with interest when she explained that the pink flowers on the snowberry would turn into big white berries for the birds, and that what the birds did not eat would fall on the ground where some would be seeds for new bushes and some would return into earth again. He questioned her then, and learned that decomposing plants were not horrid to her; they were merely the elements on their return to earth; they would come back in growth again. To his wife he said thoughtfully, "Miss Speare has made her see the poetry of disintegration. She's good. She's keen. The test, however, will come when she tries to develop accuracy in Rosalind."

Alice had no fear on that point; they would find a way. Rosalind was so vitally beautiful and responsive! As her love for the child deepened, Alice found that consciousness of her own integrity was almost compensation for the love it had cost her.

She felt, as if Rosalind were actually in her arms, the warm softness of her little body, the silky tendrils of her short loose curls. The child knew how to yield, yet never to be inert; she glowed and tingled with warm life. Alice had only to close her eyes, and imagine Rosalind her own, to know that to see such a daughter paying the price for her own selfishness would be the cruelest suffering she could inflict upon herself.

She had expressed that thought to Mrs. Karanoff

one day when she made some reference to her own story, and at once she had regretted the remark. Mrs. Karanoff's thought must have leaped to her husband's time of trial in the court of his children's judgment, for she had said, agreeing with Alice, "I would suffer any torture rather than see Rosalind pay for a wrong of mine, or than hear her virtuous condemnation of something I had done. . . ." She broke off, but began again: "If you had lived the lie! If there *had* been a Rosalind, would you have told her the truth about your mother, or would you have let well enough alone, and prayed that she might never know about the chance you had taken at her expense?"

Alice had hesitated, not so much because she lacked self-knowledge as in consideration of the earnestness of this young woman who was still in the very primer of moral philosophy. She generalized: "I believe that most wrong-doing works, on the whole, less harm than the needless confession of it."

"You do? And so do I. I wonder if our reasons for the conclusion are the same. Why do you think that?" She was looking at Alice curiously, kindly, and waiting for her answer.

"I have observed the results of needless confession, and I have known cases where the confessions were made in weakness. They were contemptible! The guilty one found relief through telling someone who would suffer because of it."

"Yes. . . . There's that. . . ."

Mrs. Karanoff had spoken as if she knew a far

deeper reason for refraining from needless confession, yet hesitated to speak of it.

Alice said, "What are your reasons? I'd like to know."

"I hesitate to tell you because it is difficult to word exactly what I mean. You might so easily think I was taking wrong too lightly, and of course I'm not; but I will try to tell you: There's the story of Joseph whose brothers sold him to some Egyptians as a slave. That was evil, wasn't it? to sell their little brother! Later Joseph became prime minister of Egypt and saved the country from famine. Great good came to Egypt from the evil of the brothers, so that Joseph himself said to his brothers, 'You meant it for evil, but God meant to bring good out of it.' And did you know that there is an Italian proverb? more like a prayer than a proverb: 'God send us evil that may work us good.' I think when one has chosen to do wrong and then suffers remorse, that instead of needless confession it is better to concentrate heart and soul and body on *making* good come out of the wrong! If confession would help, then of course. . . . But we were talking of *needless* confession." Her voice had expired, her gesture had closed the subject and she sat thinking, her eyes wide and still with that look of spirit that was more beautiful to Alice than her beautiful features.

The room had grown dark while Alice mused, but the night was crystalline, the jewel Mr. Cummerer had said it would be. He was infatuated with his patron's young

wife, that was clear, and she liked him. They were congenial, Mr. Karanoff must have seen it, yet he had left them alone together while he was busy with his secretary.

As she went downstairs on her way outdoors, and later, as she paced the darkness, questing for the cool perfumes of night, she caught the murmur of their talk.

Soon she thought she heard the closing of the great door on the street side of the house, and after that there were no more voices until Mrs. Karanoff and her companion came slowly up the slope of the lawn, distinctly white among the trees. The architect stopped; his voice was but a wooing murmur. Mrs. Karanoff walked on, and he overtook her, stepped close in front of her, and again stopped. He put his hand on her arm and when she strained away he drew her back toward him.

Alice was in front of the screen door. She meant to go in, but she stood like stone in the moment before Mrs. Karanoff's voice came clear through the stillness: "Please. . . ." as coldly spoken as if it were an order to him to remove himself from her vicinity, as if her patience with him was exhausted. She shook his hand from her arm, and walked past him.

Alice drew a quick breath, and looked up to find Mr. Karanoff standing in the hall close against the screen. His hand had halted with a cigarette almost between his lips. He set it there and struck a match. When the light flared up Alice saw that his eyes were on her, as if to say, "That's *my* wife down there! It's always like that." The little smile of satisfaction was a compliment

to her rather than a triumph for himself. Alice liked the thought she read in the look. Impulsively, she said, "Cæsar's wife. . . ." and he answered, "Exactly!"

Alice went into the house, passing him as he came out.

XV

THERE was no picnic the next day. There was no discussion for or against a picnic that Alice heard.

Mr. Cummerer did not appear at breakfast though Gray had laid a place for him, and Alice wondered if he had found it convenient to "end it all in the lake—very neatly." It was an interesting possibility that gave zest to her breakfast until she saw Cummerer himself, looking anything but damp, come off the *Russia,* lighting a cigar. He began his inspection of the new building from the lawn where Mr. Karanoff joined him for a period of upward gazing, squinting and gesticulating. They seemed entirely unself-conscious, as did Mrs. Karanoff during the few minutes she spent with him when he returned with Peter from the chasm, yet it was evident to Alice that the architect was expected to leave as soon as was convenient and to find it impossible to return. Nor did he ever return. His assistant supervised the building thereafter to Mrs. Karanoff's satisfaction.

The guest house was not finished until late in the

fall. Long before it was ready for the decorators, the children had been moved into the nursery suite that was bare and clean and bright with homely English cots and cupboards as old-fashioned as Mother Hubbard's. Throughout the rooms there were a half dozen sturdy old chests and a flock of large and small chairs with bright yellow cushions. By pulling a cord, yellow curtains abloom with flowers were made to travel over the blackboards and the windows; they gave the plain interiors a sunny liveliness.

"It's a bread-and-butter room," Mr. Karanoff said, when he sat by the fire eating the bread and butter of the first supper to be served in the schoolroom. "You could have had an exceedingly artistic and yet severely plain interior just as well as not," he complained to his wife. He looked about with somber critical eyes. "Be glad your children don't have to live in a place like this because I am a poor provider."

Mrs. Karanoff said. "Aw. . . ." her head lowered as if he were a child whom she had hurt by some slight. "Nici. . . ." She put her hand, palm up, on the table and he looked at it long and gloomily before he reached out to clasp it. As he met her waiting, caressing eyes, one corner of his mouth relaxed in an irrepressible smile of response. "You used to call me spendthrift. You used to scold me for spending. . . ." Her voice dreamed the memory; her eyes, from under upcurled lashes, held his gaze while her fingers tightened about his hand. "It's a hard-to-please Nici," she concluded affectionately, in tones that were warm with content.

When the student lamps on the round table were lighted and the curtains drawn, he rattled the poker in the grate and heaped fresh logs on the basket of coals. Lights and colors blended then in a golden pool; far corners of the room were peaceful with dusk. "We're very safe here; very . . . happy," he said slowly, and: "There's going to be revolution in Russia. It will break any minute now. My government bonds are worthless already. Why couldn't this revolution have come twenty-five years ago when I might have been a leader? I was born for war, and now it comes too late."

"On which side would you have fought?" his wife asked him. "You belonged to both." He seemed not to hear her. He was standing before the fire, his troubled eyes traveling about the room with kindlier, if abstracted, regard.

Mrs. Karanoff lowered her voice and said to Alice, "His father was an officer in the czar's army; his mother was of the oppressed people. He has pride in one, sympathy for the other. I don't see how he could choose!"

"Sympathy or no sympathy, I would have fought against bolshevism," he said to them. "Property rights. . . ." He did not finish the sentence, and Alice thought he had not so effectively disposed of his sympathy as he would have the women believe.

It was interesting, at moments such as these, to know that she was reading him correctly, and it occurred to Alice then that she understood him better than she understood his wife. There were apparent contradictions

in Mrs. Karanoff that she could not reconcile, for with all her simplicities she was not simple, and for all his complexities Mr. Karanoff was not complex. Alice had thought for the first several months that she was only seeming to read Mr. Karanoff, that one day she would find how little she had really understood him, but time proved that she did, in truth, read him aright. He was exactly what he seemed to be.

When the day had come for her to decide between Rosalind and a return to Miss Belden's School, he had made her feel his faith in her. He wanted her to stay, and said so; he discussed Rosalind's further study with her, remarking at the conclusion: "I don't think Rosalind's mind is like mine. I see no resemblance yet. But she's not like anybody especially. She is bright? You see no slightest reason to question her grade of intelligence?"

"Oh, no! But she *is* like you, Mr. Karanoff! She is quick in decision; she knows her own mind. If you knew other children you would see how very much like you she is. Some children say 'I don't know' to almost everything you ask them, even to their preferences in things they are supposed to be interested in. Notice, when you ask Rosalind a question, how emphatically she says yes or no. She never trails the word as if she were not certain. When she does a small lesson she often says, 'Does that sata'fy you, Mi' Speare?' She doesn't ask if it is right or by any word express doubt of herself. But—does it *sata'fy me?*"

She could have said nothing that would please the

proud parent more. His dark skin crinkled all over his face as he smiled. "She has an imperious little way of lifting her head, of lifting her eyebrows," he confided to Alice then, "that is like me—and like my father. My father was pure Slav, you know, fair, like Rosalind, but with a different cast of countenance. She has her mother's Anglo-Saxon features. Not so pretty as her mother, though. Do you think so?"

"No. Her mother is a beauty. Rosalind will be beautiful."

He approved the distinction. "Nico . . ." he said, and smiled, then lowered his voice as he finished: "I can't complain that Nico doesn't look like me. Lord love us, we could make a rabbi of Nico! He'll have the mind for business. Rosalind must be able to administer affairs, or at least to keep a wise eye on her business hirelings, but Nico will be the executive, I prophesy." His tone of satisfaction was in accord with the generous terms he had then proposed to Alice. If she would resign her position in Miss Belden's School he would give her the salary she had had there over and above her living, and a fifteen per cent bonus at the end of each year, but in exchange for this extra bonus he wanted her to be his wife's first assistant as well as governess for the children. "House mother, assistant hostess, whatever you call it, as if you were her sister. You know when to vanish, and when to step in and act," he had gladdened her by saying. "Just go on and, until we must have a tutor when Nico is seven, we'll call the thing settled."

Perhaps that moment, when Mr. Karanoff had said, ". . . we'll call the thing settled," was the one to remember as the definite beginning of her long years at The Towers, yet it was not that August day, but the first evening by the schoolroom fire in late September that her memory cherished as one of relief and deep content. On that occasion the family were gathered in the throne room of her kingdom; when her employers came, thereafter, to have supper with the children they would expect to be with her, and they would not linger if they did not find her company acceptable. That certainty then, and ever after, mitigated many of her trials during the years when she led Rosalind up and ever up through her varied curriculum, and prepared the baby Nico for the empire that awaited him.

As King Philip of Macedonia might have brought toy soldiers to the nursery of his princeling, Alexander, so Nicolai brought the miniature of the army his heir was one day to lead. He had a large model of his own possessions made in Switzerland, and installed in the nursery before Nico was three years old. There were forests threaded by rivers and dotted with lumber camps; there were mountains with open mines, with waterfalls and lakes, and a tiny city where picturesque buildings along a river's banks were labeled Northern Wisconsin Paper Company. There was a railroad; there were boats; there were trucks for Nico's finger to guide, and the whole beauteous empire was made alive by electricity when Nico pressed a button. Lights came

on in camps and city; trains began to move and logs to float; tiny men swung their axes in the forests and horses came out of their stables ready for work. At the heart of all that lovely world was a man standing on an irony balcony outside a battery of windows in one of the picturesque mills. His hand shaded his eyes as he looked toward a far hilltop where a white house with square towers and Moorish arches shone like an alabaster shrine.

"That Nico," Nico would say, putting his finger on the youth who surveyed his lands.

The plans for the making of a paper king were well laid save that they reckoned without knowledge of the young heir. Before Nico was five it was evident to everybody except his father that the boy was a musician. At three he had shown unmistakable first signs; at four his little hands fluttered like butterflies over the keyboard of the piano, and somehow produced harmony that was distinctly different from the efforts of the average musically inclined child.

His mother took him and Alice to New York, ostensibly to visit her mother and aunt, but really to have the great Giusti pronounce upon him. Giusti heard him in his own studio. When Nico had gone through his repertoire, the composer went to stand before Mrs. Karanoff, and said: "This is genius. What are you going to do with him?"

Even before he spoke, Mrs. Karanoff had risen, drawn to her feet by the reverence, the emotion in

Giusti's face. "Will you take him? as a pupil?" she asked. "Now?"

Giusti met her shining eyes, turned away, and again looked at her while he passed his handkerchief over his forehead. He compressed his lips and slowly shook his head. "It makes me sweat to think of having genius like that in my hands to make or mar. No, I won't take him now because I never have taught little children, but you go to Madame Egede, whose specialty is children, and she will advise you." He wrote her address on a card, then he stooped before Nico. Thoughtfully he examined his tiny hands and looked into his wide oriental eyes. "This is an old, old soul," he said impressively. "Through many lives he has learned music." He put his hand on the boy's head as if he were blessing him.

Madame Egede was equally positive that genius had come rapping at her door, but she wiped no moisture from her forehead; she knew how to talk to little children. There were several interviews with her before it was finally decided that Alice should stay in New York to study Madame's method of teaching the very young; after that it would be necessary for her to take Nico to the studio once a month, if possible, to have her work with him supervised. The first lessons were exceedingly simple; Alice would learn how to have him exercise his fingers by means of little games that they would play for five minutes at a time. Madame held up her hands, and indicated the fourth and fifth fingers. "These weak ones," she said, "We are going to make them supple,

absolutely at the command of the mind, so . . ." She began to open and shut them as if they were a pair of scissors while she intoned: "*Shear* the *sheep* and *trim* the *tree-ee,* But *let* the *lit*-tle *lambs* go *free*-ee. That sort of thing! Miss Speare is perfectly capable of doing everything he needs now. He's just a baby. You have no wish to put him out in public for a while?"

"Oh, no!"

"Well then. . . ." She smiled them on their way.

A few days later Alice was a pupil of Madame, and Mrs. Karanoff was journeying home with Nico to have out her differences with her husband on the subject of the boy.

As usual, where the children were concerned, she had her way with him. The doors of music were to be opened to Nico even though the encouragement he was to have threatened his father's dearest ambition. It was all poppycock and women's hysteria, Mr. Karanoff said. He refused to buy a cottage piano for the nursery; he refused to discuss a tutor who was qualified as a teacher of music.

When Alice returned he questioned her searchingly as to her opinion of Giusti and Madame Egede. Were they sincere or merely pupil-greedy? Didn't teachers of their sort fairly sell their souls deceiving girls who were ambitious for grand opera? He had known girls in New York. . . . *His wife* the dupe of a lot of Italian troubadours, leeches on art-mad Americans!

"But Mrs. Karanoff isn't art-mad; she has no illusions about an artist's life in music or on the stage or

anywhere! She is heart and soul devoted to you and her children, and she wants Nico to have his chance." It was by emphasizing just such obvious facts that he knew as well as she, that Alice persuaded him. Later he accepted Nico's genius and was proud of him, but the fact of it had defeated something in his spirit of which he was silent, and which Alice found pathetic. He had wanted his son to be a genius, but a financial genius, not a piano-playing eccentric.

"Paderewski is a triple genius," Alice reminded him. "Music, politics, finance."

To which he responded with a revival of hope, "It might be. It might quite easily be. We must have the tutor who will show him the romance of business." He continued to himself more than to her: "If he is to play in public he will want to restore the spelling and pronunciation of my name. I accepted the Americanization because a foreign name is no asset in business here, but for a musician. . . ." He made a gesture of contempt, "it is *de rigueur*. The name was originally Kar-a-*nen*-ov. Ni-*co*-lai Kar-a-*nen*-ov. A fine name. *I* had to earn it before I was granted the use of it."

XVI

THE first gleams of Nico's genius were the star-points of interest for his mother during the years of war when her husband spent most of his time in Washington; when friends were leaving for France;

and the hospital, like an ailing child, demanded all that she could give to it.

After Clara and several other nurses went with Dr. Field as members of a Chicago hospital unit, Mrs. Field, in her new rôle as bereft wife, with a thin, rather pathetic Norris, haunted The Towers. She was an old enemy of the sort that is commonly called friend, whom Mrs. Karanoff accepted easily if not intimately; but the boy was almost ignored. Alice felt it to be Mrs. Karanoff's greatest flaw that she could visit her ancient displeasure against his father on a lonely child.

He and Rosalind had grown apart, for he had found the world of books; and he had lost interest in girls. Though Rosalind had not yet attained to the estate for which the word girl stood in his vocabulary, she was rapidly approaching the condition.

When Mrs. Field decided to send him to his mother's parents in East Orange, and make the hospital a full time occupation for herself, Mrs. Karanoff was obviously relieved. Since she could not like the boy it was better for him and for them all that she should be spared the irritation of his presence. That was Alice's conviction until the hour before Norris left; then, characteristically, Mrs. Karanoff mystified her by hastening down to her jeweler to buy Norris an army wrist watch that she gave him at the station just before he went aboard his train. When he cried out with delight and turned to kiss her, she opened her arms and received him with maternal ardor and a misty sweetness of response that could not have been feigned. In that

moment she was loving the child and apologizing to him.

With the same maternal passionateness of sympathy she received Peter Gaffney, who was the first of the wounded to be returned. He had lost his left arm during the offensive against St. Mihiel, and he had come to White Falls, calling it home, because his mother was there. She had died while he was on his difficult way to her, and he arrived broken and alone to the desolation of a fresh grave.

As soon as she heard of his trouble, Mrs. Karanoff had gone to him and brought him to her house. "He has lost more than an arm, Alice," she wept. "His courage is gone and his spirit broken."

She knelt by his bed, as whitely spirituelle as a stage nun, and heard his brokenly whispered *Miserere* while she gently patted his coat. Patted his coat because there was no free hand for her to clasp! "Peter," she cried at last with the vivification he needed, "this is your lowest hour! This is the beginning of the end of darkness for you. We're going to keep you here until you are well. You can be our chauffeur again. The children will love you and help you, and you will help me with them. The old energy and the old ambitions will return. You'll see! You were an exceptional student; you'll be an exceptional man, Peter; I *know you will!*"

She had been right; all that she prophesied had come to pass. He did stay as chauffeur until the post-war turmoil was over, when he left them for Chicago

and a law firm where Mr. Karanoff was a valued client.

These chapters in Mrs. Karanoff's life at that time, Alice remembered and cherished, not knowing why she needed to cherish them nor why their loveliness saddened her. Other rich women did similar kindnesses, and she thought it no more than was right that from their security they give a measure of security to unfortunates. "It's her loneliness that gives it pathos; her loneliness and her beauty," she told Clara once. And Clara—lone woman—had answered: *"She* can't be lonely! She has a family. . . . I think it's because she's beautiful and not vain."

Alice did not discuss with Clara the various kinds of loneliness.

XVII

IT seemed to Alice that Clara and others of the hospital unit had been at home a long time before word came that Dr. Field would return. Norris was waiting for him in East Orange, and the revived Lyda was living a gay post-war life, sometimes in her father's house, sometimes in her apartment, depending on the amount of freedom required for her activities.

"Lyda will feel as if she were being married again," Mrs. Karanoff said. "She's been so utterly unattached for three years. I have got to give a dinner for the Fields—a big one. I never have given a proper party

for them. Would I be forgiven, Alice, if I showed Nico off just a little bit?"

Before Alice could answer, Mr. Karanoff said sharply, "Want to show Field, do you, that Nico is as good a specimen as Rosalind?"

The color swept up into Mrs. Karanoff's face. "I want to show everybody the wonder of Nico!"

She *would* make these meticulously correct answers to her husband's spleen! She could not realize that such remarks to those he loved, even to those he did not love, were no more serious than others made them. He liked to say sharp things as a dog likes to bark; once said, they were forgotten, yet his wife seemed never to become immune to the sting of them.

Alice thought Nico might be shown off, and Rosalind too, because they were so very beautiful together. Rosalind, who was almost ten, was a slim, graceful little girl with dark blue eyes and soft hair that was rapidly losing its gold. She had no outstanding talents other than her social gifts, yet she was both lovable and interesting, whereas Nico's appearance and his performance on the piano were his attraction. He was erect and challenging even at five. His black hair curled tightly, framing a face more Semitic than his father's; his wide-set black eyes were beautiful with intelligence and feeling, but he was perverse, usually, with strangers, and pouting and disobedience were the rule of his temperament. He was disciplined more in a week than Rosalind had been in a year at his age, yet discipline seemed to accomplish nothing with him.

On the night of the dinner, Alice brought him and Rosalind down a few minutes before the cocktails were served. Immediately after Mrs. Karanoff had presented them, Alice lifted Nico to the piano bench where he promptly gave an exhibition of obstinacy that called Rosalind's eager amiability into contrast. As big sister she felt responsible for him; she persuaded and cajoled him while her mother's cheeks flamed, and the guests looked on with restrained amusement.

When Mr. Karanoff stepped forward to take charge of the rebel, Nico turned defiant. It was a danger signal that his father had learned to heed; he seized his young heir by one arm and carried him off to the nursery. As he rejoined his guests a few minutes later, Rosalind was saying good night. She made a last bobbing curtsey and turned to him with her arms lifted. His displeasure in Nico reacted in an impulse of expressive affection for the little girl. He held her close after he had kissed her good night, murmuring, "My darling. . . . My little Rosalind."

The next morning at breakfast he delivered a characteristic ultimatum. While his eyes ran down the columns of the Chicago Tribune he said, "Well, Terry, you showed Dr. Field your little genius! He didn't laugh; he didn't seem to want to laugh, and therein he differed from the other guests. Nico!" He lowered the paper and turned to the little fellow whose morning face was dewy with innocence. "We're going to have a tutor for you. We're going to have him *now,* and you are going to be under male rule entirely for a while.

You don't understand me, of course, and you aren't seeing the look of relief on Miss Speare's face. She'll be glad to hand you over to a gentleman with a duster; a duster that will keep your little breeches warm, my son. Now, Terry; genius or no genius, this boy is going to learn obedience."

It was the decree Alice dreaded. When Mr. Karanoff spoke in that tone, action was certain to follow, nor would he tolerate half measures. His very way of buttoning his coat when he rose from the table told Alice he was already in pursuit of the man who should try his hand where she had failed. He was punishing her for the wound Nico had given his vanity the night before; he was not going to let her escape the penalty of that humiliation. Yet even as she realized the change a tutor would make in her life, she was feeling amusement over the expression that had flashed in Mr. Karanoff's eyes when he had said to Nico, 'You aren't seeing the look of relief on Miss Speare's face.' He knew full well that the look on her face was dismay and appeal from the affliction of a tutor! He liked tormenting her; it was his unhappy way of teasing. There was nothing for it but to answer him in the spirit he required of her. "Bring on your tutor," she said, smiling into his eyes. "I'll help him all I can."

He liked that answer; she saw that he admired her for it, and she went from the exhilaration of his approval almost believing that her promise and her smile were sincere.

This was the first day of May, and bright and un-

seasonably mild for Wisconsin. She would get away from the foreshadow of the threatened tutor that already darkened the nursery suite, by taking the children outdoors for their lessons.

After a brief wandering, lugging books and rug, they decided on a sheltered spot in the lee of the guest house, where the bentgrass offered dry cushiony sod on which Alice made their schoolroom. To her left the ground sloped slightly to the lake. The dancing birches in their white spring dresses, with their frail branches budding tender green, were the only trees in a clearing that was like a prelude to the symphony of the grove. The sun shone faintly there, gilding the occasional cluster of last year's russet leaves with gold, and warming the new pink foliage of the oaks. As Alice directed the children, she lifted her eyes to the loveliness with the worshiping gaze of the pantheist.

Toward noon the children were restless, and Alice sent them into the grove for acorns to use in Nico's number work. While she waited for them she heard steps approaching and Mrs. Karanoff's voice, then some man answering huskily, "You aren't driving me away . . . exactly. I knew before you told me that I would have to go."

Mrs. Karanoff said tensely, "There's never been any peace. But while you were in France it was a little easier."

"I know. . . . It was for me too. . . ." They passed on down the slope among the birches, and they were

some distance from her nook before they came into Alice's range of vision. The man was Dr. Field.

They met the children, and at first glimpse of them Mrs. Karanoff turned with frightened face and searched the scene for Alice. Alice lifted her hand in gay response while her heart pounded with strange emotion.

For a while they stayed in the path talking to the children, and as they returned the same way they had gone down, they passed Alice with a greeting that hardly interrupted their talk. She heard the words "hospital" and "board meeting" and Dr. Field: "I know you'll carry on the fight for the nurses' home."

It was difficult to meet Mrs. Karanoff's eyes at lunch time, for Alice expected her to begin, hesitatingly, "Alice, I want to explain . . ." but she did not speak of it. Until that afternoon when Mr. Karanoff came to the nursery she did nothing that would indicate the least consciousness of the talk Alice had overheard.

"I have startling news for you," she told him, at once. "Dr. Field came here to-day to tell me that he is leaving White Falls. He is going to Cleveland, to some clinic there. He wanted to talk over the hospital situation with me."

Mr. Karanoff expressed astonishment. "Field leave the hospital! After all the fuss to get him established? What's the matter with White Falls?"

Mrs. Karanoff made an expressive little gesture of indifference. "Greater opportunity elsewhere. . . ." She had turned away from her husband.

Except for his further grumbling criticism of Dr.

Field, nothing more was said about the proposed change until the next day when Mr. Karanoff came home. As always, his wife paled and flushed faintly when she heard his step, but instead of the usual sequel—an affectionate welcoming kiss given with soft sighing relief—alarm leaped into her eyes as he faced her belligerently. "Lyda Wayne came to my office today to talk about her mysterious husband. She wanted me to use my power with the hospital board to have him offered special inducements to stay here. I told her I wouldn't lift a finger to induce him to stay, and she shot back at me that she knew positively that *you* were trying to get him out of town. She said enough more besides. Have you had anything to do with this decision of Field's?"

Alice was feeding Nico. She bent her head above the child and talked softly to him, hardly knowing what she said, for she was trembling and cold with a sickening sense of tragedy. She felt the high tension in the long pause before Mrs. Karanoff answered: "Yes. I have."

Alice glanced up. Mrs. Karanoff's eyes were on her husband's face. She seemed to be crying: *This is the end.* Mr. Karanoff made a gesture toward the door, and Mrs. Karanoff preceded him to their own rooms.

The click of the latch as the door closed upon them affected Alice like the cocking of a revolver. She had difficulty in steadying herself for the long half hour before Gray announced dinner; and her relief was great when Rosalind, calling at her mother's door, was answered by both parents emerging together. Together

they came down the long staircase and took their places at the table. Mr. Karanoff was silent and frowning; Mrs. Karanoff was like marble, and clutched in the grip of her strange illness. Her breath was expelled through quivering nostrils; her lips were sealed against food, yet she sat through the meal and led such conversation as there was. . . .

She was ill that night, and for several nights insomnia prodded her. She spoke of it with her disarming simplicity, and several times accepted Alice's help. Once in the small hours they walked the study floor together, their arms tight locked, their voices muted. Mrs. Karanoff suffered tearlessly, without complaint. "It's a nervous heart—cardiac neurosis, they call it," she said, as if the naming of such a malady were amusing.

She lost pounds that she could not spare, and her voice grew weak, while Mr. Karanoff seemed to increase in strength as if some thought were at work like ferment in him, giving the alarming impression that he might explode at any moment. He watched his wife narrowly, talked hardly at all and frequently sat motionless, close wrapped in some engrossing revery.

"Mr. Karanoff is going to Russia," his wife said one morning at breakfast. "He leaves to-night." Her face told nothing, and Mr. Karanoff's gave no evidence that he even heard her. Nor did he say good-by to Alice or the children, who had gone upstairs early that evening, believing that of course he would let them know before he left.

Sometime after he had driven away Mrs. Karanoff

came slowly to the schoolroom and stood leaning against the door frame. "He is gone," she said huskily. "He said to tell you the tutor was postponed indefinitely. It's a comfort to know that you understand our situation so thoroughly, Alice."

She was smiling faintly, and with the words she moved on along the hall while Alice cried within herself, "I know nothing of your situation! I know less now than when I came!"

XVIII

MR. KARANOFF did not write to his wife. As the mails came, day after day, and there was no word from him save through his office, she became an insomnolent little ghost—a ghost because no one saw her so save Alice who was haunted by her uncomplaining endurance. It was her manner of quiescence and her faint, tender smile that made the others blind. They saw her as she wanted to be seen; they were surprised when at last she was unable to be up and stayed in her room, saying merely, that she was tired; that she didn't want to eat.

Alice urged her to see a doctor.

"There is nothing a doctor can do," she whispered. "He would have to kill me to cure me." In a more resolute tone, she added, "This experience is testing my belief, Alice, and proving it true. No circumstances can hurt me unless I let them. I can take whatever is my

lot and turn it into stepping stones. The children . . . not to be afraid for the children, is my struggle! My heart breaks at the thought of Rosalind . . . both my children. I won't be able to make them understand yet . . . about stepping stones."

She paused, looking, looking at Alice as if she would read her thought. "I worry you because my body is sick; I know I do. I'll go to Battle Creek. Won't you take me as far as Chicago? You could stay in Chicago and play a while. You need it, and I need you on the journey." With the last words she turned her face into the pillow and wept.

Alice took her all the way to Battle Creek, and left her there. She did stop in Chicago meaning to play, but she did not stay because during her first dinner there she met George Hodson. It was in the dining room of the Blackstone. He came in following his wife, who was dressed in elaborate evening array with aigrettes and ostrich fan. As their waiters seated them at a table nearby, Alice saw that they were merely two more inscrutible, conspicuously prosperous-looking world citizens. They were midway in a long dinner before George's abstracted gaze concentrated on Alice in recognition.

He rose at once and came toward her. He held her cold hand in a brief clasp as he shook his head ruefully over his own stupidity. "To think I have been looking at you from soup to salad and didn't know you, Alice! I thought you were a stranger and that your smile was for somebody behind me." Had he been stupid, or had

she grown so barren of allure that he had simply not recognized his Alice in the woman she had become? Her honest mind cried the questions, longing for denial.

They talked of the things that mattered least in that first meeting, but later when they sat in the lobby, while Mrs. Hodson wrote a letter, they touched the more vital subjects. "We have no children," George said after she had told him about Rosalind. "I often think of the irony of it. You have fared better than I in that respect, after all."

Mrs. Hodson's thin face was both sour and bitter in repose, yet animate with cultivated charm when she chose to make it so. During the two short conversations that she shared with them, George had little to say; his manner toward his wife was perfunctorily courteous; no more than that, and small wonder! How could any woman who had lived with George, in the shelter of his care and provision, have become so witch-like of countenance? Could it be that George had provoked the distortion? for her expression amounted to that. Alice's heart ached with regret—ached like a new wound for the love she had lost. And then she wondered if she had lost. There was something in George's look, when his eyes probed hers, that was more beautiful to possess than all the years and ardors his wife had had from him. She had become a habit, while Alice was part of the reality of his idealism—of his unfulfilled dreams. "Wedded to him, not through union, but through separation," Alice quoted, in desperate need of that negative comfort. In spite of it she returned,

heavy-hearted, to the mystery and the problems in White Falls.

On the morning of her return, Alice moved the children into the guest house as a celebration of the closing of school for the summer.

Nico and Rosalind stood, one on each side of her, while she ate her breakfast and told her what they were going to do to surprise their mother and father. Every single night they would have a fire on the beach and cook supper there with toasted marshmallows for dessert. Every single morning Rosalind would wash all the soiled things in the lake, like Clara. She would wear her bathing suit, and spread things on the grass with stones to hold them down. Every single afternoon Alice would read to them while Rosalind sewed doll clothes.

Nico jumped up and down in ecstasy. "Every single time I'll be the Gray and serve things!"

"No, *sir!* We don't have any Gray in the cabin ever, do we, Gray? We plays pioneers, and you have to get the wood for the fireplaces, doesn't he? You're the *man* of our family, Nico, and you have to get the *wood.*"

Nico accepted the responsibility amiably. "I'll chop down big trees, an' make logs," he promised largely.

He postponed the devastation of the grove, however, to haul his wagon full of toys to the cabin. He made three trips while Alice and Rosalind and a procession of house maids carried down food and clothing and books.

Rosalind demanded the right to get luncheon. "I'll

have ramekins with soufflé in them and creamed potatoes and milk and cake and. . . ."

Alice's eye gave warning. "Soufflé?" she asked skeptically as if to say "Lark's tongues?"

Rosalind changed her mind. "I'll set the table and—"

"Help shell the peas," Alice put in smoothly, "and I'll show you how to cook them."

Rosalind's joy had not missed so much as a beat. She suggested toast. "I'll make toast at the table, all myself!"

"Wonderful!" Alice's voice automatically put approving inflection into the word, but at that instant George Hodson's face was vividly before her, a lined face, deeply tanned, repressed. There were times when the children's voices, thrusting their infant thoughts upon her, brought down a mood of depression that was like chains about her. This was one of those times.

"We must put our clothes away," she said abruptly to Rosalind and went into their bedroom, where unexpectedly she glimpsed her own face in the mirror. Because George's face and his wife's were before her mental eyes, she saw her own reflection differently, and *found it comely!* Its health and freshness were more evident than the marks of time, the consciousness of which had made her shrink at first from the searching beams of George's eyes. Had he, perhaps, actually been knowing that she was part of the reality of his unfilled dreams? Had he looked into her face that way because he had found something *worth* looking at?

"Rosalind," she said, suddenly, stooping before the

happy child. "Do I look tired this morning? worse than usual or better than usual? Do I always look the way I do now?"

Rosalind's unclouded gaze made honest inquiry. "Why, you look a little *bit* tired. You're prettier when you're all dressed up with powder on. . . ." Rosalind's caressing fingers touched her cheeks for a moment, then she flung her arms about Alice.

That night in the Blackstone dining room she had been as much "all dressed up" and powdered as she ever was. She had looked her very best. . . . She kissed Rosalind with inexpressible affection. "Are you glad I live with you, darling? Do you want me to stay always?"

"Um *huumm!* I do!" Rosalind cried as Alice had known she would, but it was no less a comfort because she had been certain of it.

XIX

MRS. KARANOFF had been living the cottage life with the children for a month before her husband returned. In all that time there was but one letter from him, and that Mrs. Karanoff read and reread and brooded upon for days. She gave long hours to writing and tearing up what she had written before she was ready to mail the answer which was to await his arrival in New York.

It had plenty of time to reach its destination before

he landed; he did not, however, make any immediate response to it. His first message to his wife came through the office by telephone to Gray who came down to the cabin and gave it in his own words to her. Yet, to this casual treatment, her first reaction was one of tenderness. She cried, "He has sciatica! Then he is suffering in New York *now*. . . ."

When Gray said, "You and Mr. Karanoff will be living at the big house again. . . . I'll have things ready?" she assented absently, and later, by the orders she gave, Alice knew that she had not heard the man.

Mr. Karanoff's first need when he arrived was for a doctor who would prescribe what he himself knew he must have—the simplest of diets and absolute quiet for a few days. By the time Alice saw him he was rested, though still unable to be up, and he lay very still and grimly patient while he talked unemotionally of Russia with a flow of words that sounded to her like a monologue with which he had armed himself for visitors. In his usual staccato sentences and verbless phrases, he told her, absently, that he had been wretchedly sick and uncomfortable all the time he was gone. It was too soon to make investments in Russia anyway; another four years would see things different. He talked as if he had gone to Russia solely for the purpose of capitalizing her agony, and had found her wounds so fresh that she had been uninteresting.

Whatever the reason for his going, he had come back with wounds of his own, and subtly changed toward his

wife, who was devoting herself to him and to keeping the children's devotion from tiring him. Despite the monotonous tone of his recital, the atmosphere of the room in which he lay was charged with emotion that found expression through the faces of the two elders—Mrs. Karanoff's heart-breaking smile, her husband's averted eyes. Little Nico, at his sweetest, and Rosalind, who was eagerly solicitous for her father's comfort, were in the foreground, while their mother seemed, not only figuratively but actually, to stand back in anxious waiting and concern for them all. She directed the children's activities, achieving harmony through their willingness to serve, using the tendrils of her love as cord to bind them to each other—brother to sister; father to children, yet her manner toward her husband was restrained as if she were watching for a sign from him that should ease the throbbing, painful tension between them.

The trouble that had begun with Mrs. Field's accusations seemed not to have been explained away; nor was it cured by time. Mrs. Karanoff had admitted with calm courage that she had had something to do with Dr. Field's removal from White Falls, yet, for all her seeming candor, there evidently remained a mystery concerning which Mr. Karanoff must not have questioned her. He seemed to be judging her in a silence more cruel than spoken condemnation would have been. Unless Alice misread the signs, he was freshly wounded, while she, whose wounds were old, was bearing the injustice of his doubt—or was it justice?—without ex-

pression either of hope or fear, but with patience that was illumined by the steady flame of her love.

It was probably to be expected, yet Alice was startled and amused when Mr. Karanoff took up the subject of their last talk together, almost two months before.

"I didn't get the tutor," he began: "I was on the track of a fellow who sounded like the right man. Kittredge. Philip. Harvard and Oxford; war and illness. Thought he could manage a five-year-old."

"I can manage a five-year-old!" The time had come for Alice to declare her professional competency. "I can do as much as any man with Nico, given time. But conditions have changed. Nico is. . . ."

He interrupted: "Would you like to have all your time for Nico?"

"And get the tutor for Rosalind? No, not yet. Really, Nico is. . . ."

Again he interrupted. "I didn't suggest a tutor for Rosalind. I would send Rosalind to Miss Belden's."

Alice stared at him. "To Miss Belden? This fall?"

"Why not?"

Alice glanced over her shoulder at Mrs. Karanoff, who was rearranging roses in fresh water. She was looking at her husband, transfixed, and he was looking at Alice, yet his half closed eyes were seeing his wife.

"Why not?" he repeated insistently? "You like the school as well as ever, don't you?"

"Not for a child of ten."

"Why not? Don't they take girls of ten?"

"As day pupils, yes."

"Then why not Rosalind?"

"For one thing, because Rosalind's mother can give her more than any school in the next few years. She ought to be with her mother."

He smiled, not unkindly. "You speak one word for Rosalind and two for yourself. You want her to be wherever you are. Well, you could take her to Miss Belden's and live there with her *in loco parentis* till she feels at home."

Why didn't Mrs. Karanoff speak? Why didn't he include her in their talk? Alice couldn't see her without turning, and since Mr. Karanoff pointedly left her completely out of the conversation she could not call her into it. Was she still staring, frozen, or had she quietly resumed the innocuous rearranging of roses?

"I wasn't thinking of myself," Alice said, knowing she must answer him point by point. "I was sincere in what I said. Mrs. Karanoff's relationship to Rosalind is a perfect thing. It shouldn't be interrupted. I have never seen a mother and daughter more closely and successfully attached."

"Go on. You can say it all. She's left the room."

"Then I will say it all, if you will let me. I started to tell you a while ago that Nico is different. You interrupted me because you wanted to talk about Rosalind. Mrs. Karanoff has found the cure for Nico's temper, yet she seems not to have told you."

"No, she hasn't told me."

"She came home from the sanitarium with understanding of Nico—she put herself in Nico's place. She

tried to see with his eyes, and she decided that love of beauty, of harmony, was Nico's profoundest passion. She recalled times of tantrum and showed me that the conditions had been such that Nico's sensibilities had been hurt. The night of the dinner for Dr. and Mrs. Field, for instance. The people had been laughing, talking; the lights were bright and Nico was confused. He had played for a few, but he had never approached the piano when the ballroom was so astir with color and voices and cross-currents of feeling. It was so inharmonious to him that when he was told to play against that disturbing something, he rebelled. Feeling it, seeing it with Nico's sensibilities, was illuminating.

"His mother reasoned that if he knew how ugly he was when he was in a tantrum that he would be cured by shock. She said that whoever was nearest him when he next had a tantrum was to carry him to a mirror and show him himself.

"It was as simple as that, Mr. Karanoff. There's nothing very new in the method, yet I hadn't thought of it! I had believed that patience, firmness, lending my own control to Nico was the way to help him outgrow his temper; we still do that. . . . Or rather, in the two outbursts he has had since his mother came home we have done that, and the result was perfect.

"Fortunately his mother was with him both times. She carried him to a mirror while he howled and kicked, and when he saw himself he acted as if ice water were being poured over him; then Mrs. Karanoff held him, and helped him get control of himself. After that she

put him to bed as punishment with only bread and milk for supper. That, of course, because he was tired and needed the extra long rest."

"And you think he's cured?"

"I think the cure is well started. His mother has made him understand that his temper is contemptible. Like discords on the piano, like dirt and unkindness, it is ugly."

Mr. Karanoff said, with a twist of bitterness, "Nico's temper is of a piece with mine. I suppose she will make him see that I am contemptible."

To that, Alice made no answer.

He passed his hand over his eyes, and lay for a while with averted face.

After a silence so long that Alice rose to leave him, he spoke: "A perfect thing, you say, Rosalind's relationship to her mother."

"Yes. No school can give her now as much as her mother can give her. I . . . I find Mrs. Karanoff rare . . . and beautiful. You see her so, don't you, Mr. Karanoff? As deeply spirituelle?"

He stirred. "Yes . . . Yes, I do." From under the hand that still pressed his eyebrows she saw that he was looking at her and that his lower lids were edged with moisture.

XX

BY the time Mr. Karanoff was well enough to go to his office, the household was immersed in prep-

aration for a visit from Miss Spencer and Mrs. Karanoff's mother, who were coming, for the first time since Alice had lived at The Towers, not only to rest but to be fêted.

The children were moved back to the nursery suite and the guest house was garnished; the *Russia* was fully manned and extra servants for the house were brought from Chicago.

Both Mr. and Mrs. Karanoff had entered into the preparations with an energy they had never displayed before in a like cause. Mr. Karanoff seemed to enjoy the stir and entertaining for a while, then, suddenly, he showed signs of boredom, with the usual result that he found it necessary to be away, and went for a tour of his Canadian lumber camps.

It was not difficult to believe that this northern trip was an escape from his strained relations with his wife as well as relief from his relatives-in-law. However, Alice had seldom seen him and his wife together that summer after those first unhappy days of reunion; she was separated even from Mrs. Karanoff by the necessity to keep Rosalind and Nico out of the excitement, for when she was free of their care Mrs. Karanoff took charge of them.

Nothing more had been said about sending Rosalind away, but because Mr. Karanoff never forgot, she knew that at some unexpected moment the subject would be opened again.

That unexpected moment came on the first day of August when Charlie telephoned Alice that a letter

from his employer received that morning, directed him to write to Miss Belden's School to arrange for Rosalind's entry there in September. "He says, 'Tell Miss Speare to arrange details with Miss Belden. She is to go with Rosalind and stay with her.' "

Alice went straight from the telephone to Mrs. Karanoff's room. She could not believe that, put to the test, the mother would agree to the plan for the little girl.

She found her standing before a long mirror arranging her hair. She wore a new, tailored dress of shining white satin, as plain and straight as one of Rosalind's, but made mature by a black belt and glittering crystal buttons.

"I'm going to Mrs. King's luncheon, you know, and it's late." She put a last hairpin into place. "What's the matter? you look distressed."

"Charlie has just telephoned me. He says Mr. Karanoff has instructed him to write to Miss Belden's School to arrange for Rosalind's entry there this fall. I am so surprised! I can't express it. I didn't know! . . . I had no idea. . . ."

Mrs. Karanoff stared at Alice as if she had not heard her. "What did you say?" she asked. She sat down on the bench of her dressing table and put out her hand as if to take up her powder puff, but she did not touch it. She sat almost breathless while Alice repeated. Undoubtedly, she was shocked. She caught her lip between her teeth and stared before her for a moment, while the familiar tightening of her features

and her labored breathing told Alice that the news had struck hard.

"I made no objection to it . . . that time. I can't complain," she said grimly. Her eyes darkened and her lips grew dry.

It was a hot day, but the skin on her hands was mottled and quivering with nervous chill.

"Surely you can protest. You can change your mind. Rosalind is only ten. . . ."

"No." The answer was positive. "I shall not protest. Under the circumstance, it is best that Rosalind should go. I thought the . . . the circumstances themselves had . . . ceased to be."

Alice stood by the dresser sick with the old mystery of it all. In the mirror she could see the effort Mrs. Karanoff was making to continue her dressing; the illness was upon her and she was not admitting it.

"What circumstances?" Alice asked suddenly. She had ceased to care whether it was her business or not. The thing included her too and she needed to understand. She moved around beside the table so that she faced Mrs. Karanoff. They looked straight into each other's eyes, one demanding an answer, the other arrested by the unusual tone and look.

"Alice," Mrs. Karanoff began at last. "Rosalind is . . . is very peculiarly Mr. Karanoff's child. He married me because he wanted her; he is paying for her, in a strange way. He has ambitions for her. I gave her to him because I loved him enough to do that for him. Why should I resist him now? He has his own rea-

sons. . . . Why did I give her to him if I didn't mean to let him try to make her the sort of child who would fulfill his dream?"

"But the circumstances," Alice insisted. "When Mr. Karanoff came home, the circumstances were such that he talked just once of sending Rosalind away. Then nothing more was said, and now. . . ."

Mrs. Karanoff fingered the long black ribbon of the pendant about her neck while Alice continued.

"Mr. Karanoff made a complete change in his plans when he first hinted at this thing of sending her away so young. Am I the circumstances that have changed him? He is changed! Instead of wanting Rosalind trained as he has dreamed of having her trained he seems to want to be rid of her, and me with her."

Alice had not supposed it would be possible for her to say so much, and to give her tone a quarrelsome edge. She did not for a moment think she was "the circumstances." Mr. Karanoff would dismiss her summarily enough if he did not want her, but the thing she had said was the truth; he did want to be rid of Rosalind for some mad reason. That was the point of her resentment; that was the thing she wanted Rosalind's mother to resent. She had tried to sting her into some expression of it.

Mrs. Karanoff set a small black hat on her head and pulled it down to her eyebrows. As she had stepped nearer the mirror, Alice had turned so that she could watch the reflection of the pinched little face under the sheltering brim. "You know it isn't you, Alice. I don't

believe you meant to ask me that." Her lips were quivering. She stood there a moment seeing nothing, then she pulled off her hat and turned to face Alice. "I can't go to that luncheon!" She began to walk about in a circle, her hands tight clinched. "Where is Rosalind? Don't tell Rosalind yet. Don't tell my mother. Alice . . ." She opened her lips to continue, closed them tight, and stood perfectly still, holding a sick silence, while Alice waited with all the kindness, all the yearning tenderness she felt brimming into her thought.

"Mr. Karanoff is very unhappy because of a suspicion of me that is troubling him. He doesn't say directly, 'Is such and such the truth?' He has asked me questions—other questions—and I have answered them truly. I will answer any question he asks me with the unequivocal truth. Sometimes I think he doesn't want to know the truth. If he did he would ask me quickly enough. If trouble came to us, and I had to go away, Rosalind would go with me. He couldn't bear that now; he knows how much he loves her. You said he wanted to be rid of Rosalind. Did you really mean that? Be rid?"

"I couldn't harmonize things," Alice said, "but your explanation helps. It seemed as if he wanted to be rid of Rosalind, and yet I know he loves her. Who wouldn't?"

"Anybody would," her mother replied seriously.

There was a banging on the door. "Mother. Moth-*er!* Auntie's waiting for you."

"Yes. Yes, dear. Go away, Rosalind. I'll come right down. You see how it is, Alice. If he is still unhappy

over that suspicion, and if he wants to see how it would be here without Rosalind, he must try it out. I think . . . that is his motive. . . ." She paused and began with more spirit. "You see, I love them all, all three, and I must think of us as a unit. Whatever is best for us all is the thing I must do. Am I wrong, Alice? Is there anything more my love can give?" Her eyes and tone demanded an honest answer. Alice considered.

"How about yourself? Why not think that what is happiest for you is best for your family?"

"I do! It amounts to the same thing. The greatest happiness for me is to go on as we are—we four, loving each other, close-knit, believing in each other. Things that are past, and through which we have grown to deeper understanding, shouldn't be allowed to destroy the peace we have achieved."

The peace they had achieved! What must her state have been before she attained to this condition which she called peace? From what depths had she risen—this beautiful woman? Why did she bear her husband's cruelties, defend him even? Why, for that matter, did he bear with her when he doubted her? The questions were foolish; such questions always were foolish, yet the world asked them with indignation, with wonder and tiresome insistence. Alice knew what, in this case, Miss Belden would say: that perhaps in other lives, again and again, these two who were destined for love and growth together, had loved, married, erred and failed—broken the bonds of their love in trying to escape the consequences of their aggressions, their ignor-

ance. Now, in this life, drawn on and up by the divine within themselves, they were impelled to go through at whatever cost—through to success with love their solvent. For only by going through could they—could any soul—find peace.

As Alice left her, sitting dejectedly on the end of her chaise longue, dressed for a party that she had forgotten, she could have wept for the pathos of her. So little, so lovely; centered in luxury and mystery; envied and tormented; passionately loved and as passionately distrusted for some inconceivable reason. It could not be that she was in danger of the break that she thought threatened. She and Mr. Karanoff might exaggerate each other's guilt, or whatever it was they were suffering over, but after all they were in love with each other and with their children. Further, and what was perhaps more to be reckoned with than his love was Mr. Karanoff's inordinate pride, his vanity. He was no longer young; he was sometimes ill; he needed his little family. In such circumstances he would endure much rather than let the world know that all was not happy under his roof.

XXI

MISS BELDEN wrote that since the season was late she had no vacancies; however, if Alice and Rosalind would live at The Falmouth Arms Hotel, around the corner, Rosalind could be accepted in every other respect as a resident pupil.

Alice was relieved for Miss Belden that they were not to start the school year in the dormitory, for she could not believe that Rosalind would be able to remain long away from her mother.

The child saw no flaw in the plan for her; she anticipated no unhappiness. She was radiant with the prospect of living among girls, and she thought the Christmas holiday which would bring her back to White Falls would come much too soon.

"Miss Belden's School is very expensive and very fashionable," Mrs. Karanoff said, anxiously. "You'll keep Rosalind's feet on the ground, won't you, Alice? She can't have jewelry and sophisticated clothes, regardless of the custom there."

Alice smiled, remembering the school's simplicities. "Yes, very expensive and very fashionable the way bread and milk are expensive and fashionable if you eat them at the Ritz . . . or here! Something like that. The rooms are really shabby, pine furniture and iron beds, much less pretentious than your nursery."

It was pathetic to see Rosalind's joyous anticipations wane and give place to homesickness. She was the only very little girl among the resident pupils. There were many day pupils of her age, but they were there only during school hours. During the recreation periods, Rosalind was desolate. She was the school baby, but petted only when the big girls were in the mood for it. At other times she was excluded from secrets and games and talk by the constant reminder that she was too young.

It was not, however, her loneliness that mattered so much as her growing need for her mother. She began to be ill with symptoms that could not be diagnosed. She had been perfectly well all her life and now, with the attention of the best specialists in New York, she was an ailing child given to pains and tears which she explained on every ground save that of homesickness. She didn't know, herself, that she was literally languishing for her mother.

When Alice was certain that the various outcroppings of pain were but nervous expression of heart hunger, she wrote to Mr. Karanoff. There was considerable delay before his answer arrived, and then Alice construed the pause as indecision on his part. It was probable that he too wanted Rosalind at home, yet he telegraphed merely: *Try to hold Rosalind to her course.*

On Thanksgiving day she and Alice were to see Mabel Spencer in the matinée performance of *Conquest,* and later they would dine at the actress's apartment where she was having guests in honor of her little great-niece. For several weeks Rosalind looked forward to the day when she should see her first play with her most famous relative in action, yet when she was received by her aunt in her dressing room a few minutes before the performance, the homesickness of two long months broke out in weeping. "Oh, I want my mother. I want daddy and Nico," she sobbed.

Miss Spencer was horrified. She was dressed for the first act; her make-up was complete and the bell had rung for curtain, but she held Rosalind close in her

arms while she talked with white heat, as deliberate as it was intense, about the cruelty of Rosalind's banishment; and when Alice admitted that she would be grateful for Miss Spencer's interference, she rang for her maid to take a telegram out at once. On the back of a florist's card, that bore a fulsome message of adoration, she scribbled to Mr. Karanoff: *Rosalind is ill with homesickness. If you must banish her, banish her mother with her.* She handed it to Alice to read, murmuring cryptically, "I believe he'll understand that."

"I have been hoping," Alice said, when the maid had left with the telegram, "that Mrs. Karanoff would be here to-day as a surprise to us. I was holding to that possibility before resorting to strong measures. You bring 'strong measures.' "

"My niece. . . ." Miss Spencer began, but did not finish. She bit her lip, then with a flash of exasperation she cried, "I have never seen any woman so in love as she is with Nicolai! He possesses her utterly. She has the patience, the endurance of a goddess. If *he* is learning a valuable lesson in this matter of Rosalind, she can see the thing through!"

She stooped before Rosalind, and holding her again in a close embrace, she kissed her and advised her to go out to her box and watch the play. "To-morrow, darling, you are going home. You'll come to my dinner and not cry any more, won't you? My friends want to meet you and they will love you. Then to-morrow Alice will pack for home."

When she loosed her clasp and the two turned to

Alice, Rosalind's wet face was shining with happiness. The tears were in her aunt's great lovely eyes.

The next day they were off for the west. Mrs. Karanoff had telephoned Alice Thanksgiving night in answer to the telegram, and when she had finished, Mr. Karanoff had taken the receiver. Artfully, Alice had said to him, "It's not only her mother she wants, Mr. Karanoff. It's you as well, and Nico."

"Tell her we are sick for sight of her," he cried. "Promise her that she will find us at the station in Chicago."

By the time the train reached Philadelphia Rosalind's reviving appetite became prodigious. She had not eaten so in six weeks, nor had she slept as she slept that night, yet her happiness when she was in her mother's arms found outlet in tears again. Mrs. Karanoff held her close during the worst of it while the travelers from the New York train passed in a sympathetic, smiling procession, and Mr. Karanoff looked on waiting his turn with an inscrutible expression that Alice found pathetic. When Rosalind was in his arms he lifted her and pressed her face against his cheek before he kissed her. He tried to laugh at her, and told her she was more baby than Nico—the bluff of a stoic in matters of sentiment, which deceived no one, least of all Rosalind, whose flushed face against his was like an apple blossom against the weathered bark of the parent tree.

Alice could not forget the seeming double-entendre of Miss Spencer's telegram to Mr. Karanoff, nor her

meaning comment, "I believe he'll understand that." She said to Mrs. Karanoff, when they were in the White Falls train. "I was relieved when I knew that your aunt's telegram had not reacted unfavorably on Mr. Karanoff."

"Her telegram?" Mrs. Karanoff was alert at once. "The one on Thanksgiving day? Why?"

"I thought there was just a possibility that it might . . . produce the wrong mood in him."

After a thoughtful pause, Mrs. Karanoff said, "What did she telegraph? It came to us by telephone."

Alice repeated it.

Mrs. Karanoff's whole expression seemed to dilate, then she looked out the window, drawing her brows together as if she were trying to hold her features steady. "Mr. Karanoff took the message . . ." she said slowly. "Evidently it did not . . . produce the wrong mood in him. He didn't even repeat it—exactly, to me."

Her face was so still that it was almost devoid of expression.

He had not repeated it, which meant that he had understood it as Miss Spencer had supposed he would. They knew something, they two, and Mrs. Karanoff realized now that they knew. Further, she understood that her husband did not want her to know that he knew. It hardly seemed possible that he was misjudging her, yet there was resentment—reproof even—in the tone of Miss Spencer's telegram. That, however, might be resentment on behalf of Rosalind.

He had not banished Rosalind exactly. That was not

the temper of his spirit toward her. He had sent her away for some reason that was concerned with a profound love for the child. Rosalind is priestess of the very holy of holies of his heart, Alice told herself positively.

At lunch that day in the dining car, Alice sat beside him, across from Rosalind and her mother.

Mrs. Karanoff's tenderness for the little thing who was showing her illness again in her fatigue and clinging dependence, occupied her entirely. She yearned above Rosalind, fixing the food on her plate to make it more tempting, reassuring her, murmuring endearments—caresses as natural to her as were the lights and shadows in her face. Alice wondered if she might be using the child as a means of avoiding her husband's eyes, and decided that she had forgotten the significant telegram in her concern for Rosalind. Mr. Karanoff might have been remembering it or something of the mystery in which they were netted. He ate little, but smoked and watched the two with a manner of detachment, belied by the look in his eyes that bore witness to the heaven and hell of such love as his.

When Alice said to him, "Do you remember I told you last summer that their relationship was a perfect thing?" he nodded, and his lips narrowed in the line that had been new there when he returned from Russia. It was the sign in his face of painful wounds that he was enduring in an unaccustomed silence.

1927-1928

I

ROSALIND was in love for the fifth time in three years. She informed her mother with starry gravity that the present case was real; it would endure. The others had been mere flashes in the pan!

"You know," Rosalind said impressively, "I have never worn any . . . man's fraternity pin before."

The slight hesitation that preceded the word "man's" was illumined by a beam of humor in her eyes. She was lying prone on the small boat landing, her head and shoulders diffusedly reflected in the still water of the lake, her bare forearm immersed in it. Ostensibly she was seeking bright pebbles, and occasionally she fished one up carefully, so as not to disturb the water, and laid it beside her on the silver bleached boards, but really she was dreaming dreams and testing their reality by giving them voice.

Her mother sat on a large flat rock, so close to the landing that Rosalind could have touched her with her wet hand; Alice had seated herself behind Mrs. Karanoff on the grass that ran close to the water line. She was sewing and listening in sympathetic silence, the smile in her eyes answering Rosalind's, while Mrs. Karanoff played the rôle of credulity. She affected to be blind to the half jest in her daughter's manner and answered

her softly ecstatic statements with a serenity that provoked the willing Rosalind to further confidences.

Within the week Alice and Nico had returned from Boston, where Nico had been studying music with Ebell, and Rosalind had arrived from Miss Belden's School. It had been a successful year for both children. Nico at eleven had more purpose and ambition than most men have in their maturity; Rosalind had quite outgrown the clinging dependence upon her mother that had made the first attempt at boarding school a failure. She had herself decided that she wanted to return and thereby show the world that she was no longer a baby.

That she had left her babyhood far behind her was certain to the two who watched and listened to her with anxious affection. She had developed a control that was fortified by a further quality which Alice began to believe was sagacity. There were evidences of it now and then throughout her talk, unexpected points of hard sense as native and yet as surprising as outcroppings of granite in a meadow that is bright with buttercups.

"I have been absolutely devoted to Bunny ever since Easter," she reminded her mother while she looked at a tiny pink pebble in her dripping palm. "You know I have. And when he couldn't come to our May dance I didn't invite anybody else. You know that!" Her tone asked her mother to bear witness to such evidence of devotion as convincing indeed.

"That's true," Mrs Karanoff agreed gently, "and you were desolate that night while the dance was on, if I remember correctly."

Rosalind scowled into the disturbed water. A tiny smile that tugged at the corner of her mouth was the very counterpart of one her mother was trying to suppress. The fact was that Rosalind had known, even before she had received Bunny's frenzied regrets, that her roommate's brother would be an extra man at the May dance; not only an evtra man but a very interesting and interested man who was hoping for Bunny's hard luck.

Provokingly serene, Mrs. Karanoff changed the subject. "That's a beautiful pebble, darling. It's like a little piece of Tennessee marble; way up here in Wisconsin. Do you remember the poem we used to recite together when we lay on the dock like this, looking for colored stones?"

"Um . . . huh. . . ."

Mrs. Karanoff left the rock where she had been sitting in dignified grace, and lay flat beside her daughter, who was taller and broader than she. She looked down into the shallow water that was quiet again, and began to quote slowly:

" 'I have loved clearness. Sea-tide over shoal—
'Sky before sunrise, purer than its star—
'Green light of ferns—a spring's steep silvery bowl—' "

Rosalind, yielding to her mood, pressed her cheek affectionately against her mother's shoulder and went on with the next line, pronouncing each syllable as if it were nectar that she were tasting, drop by drop:

" 'Blue halo of a candle-flame—the far
'White emphasis around midnight moons.
'All these
'I have loved, hoarding. And clear simple minds—
'Children with thoughts they do not know are dreams—
'Men with straight eyes that no bad shadow blinds
——' Mother!"

"Yes."

"I know about men's eyes like that. And white emphasis around midnight moons."

"You do?"

"Bunny.

On the train, night before last. It was wonderful. . . ." She was whispering; her bare arms were folded on the hot, dry boards. The shadow of her mother's broad hat fell on her face.

"We had all been singing Yale songs on the observation platform—every one of us, and the roar of the train was like an orchestra. It was packed, you can imagine. There were three girls on every chair. Anyway the conductor got worried and stuck around so close that we couldn't sing very well, so everybody began to drift back into the cars. After a while Bunny said to me, very low, 'Roz, you ought to see the moon. . . .' We went back to the platform again and oh, mother. . . . It made me think of 'white emphasis around midnight moons' and the 'blue halo of candle-flame,' too. Right that instant I got homesick for you and this . . .

lying like this. The poem had reminded me, and I said, 'Bunny. I love clearness. If things are straight and clear I can stand them. It's mysteries and dark things and tangles that worry me.' Mother, Bunny was WONDER-FUL; you'll never know. He understood. He said he felt that way too. 'If anybody will explain things to me so that I get the low down on them,' he said, 'I'll stand by like a soldier. It's when they say, "Do this because I tell you to, and don't ask questions" that I go wrong.' We had the most perfect talk that night. The moon was making all the sky like pearl, and the train was rushing through the cool fields, and I could smell clover. Every now and then a little brook would gleam in the moonlight, and sometimes a plume of smoke would wave against the pearly sky with sparks in it—in the smoke. Oh, I was terribly thrilled."

"You were living poetry."

"I was. That's just what I was doing."

"And you were just as much in love with the poetry as with Bunny."

Rosalind made no answer, but her kindled eyes were on her mother as Mrs. Karanoff asked quietly: "If you had to choose between the poetry of life and Bunny, which would you take?"

"I couldn't choose, because Bunny's part of the poetry."

"Yes, that's true, you make everything part of the poetry, even the smoke from the engine. If having Bunny always, meant losing the poetry gradually, little by little, would you still want him?"

"NO! A thousand times no."

"Ah." Mrs. Karanoff sat up and gave Alice a look of relief and triumph. "My wise little child! Rosalind, sometime there will be a man of whom you'll say: He's worth going through hell for; if he needs me to go through with him, I'll go, and bring him up and out with me!' That will be a different kind of poetry, but *poetry,* if you'll see it so."

The passion of conviction in her mother's tone electrified Rosalind.

"Mother!"

They sat facing each other, their eyes alert with questioning to which neither asked an answer. Mrs. Karanoff held a perfect silence; Rosalind was the first to break it. She lifted her arms above her head crying, "Oh, I lived more in that moment just now than in all the year at school. You believe that, don't you? You believe that I could love enough to go through anything for the man I love and bring him out with me." She gave her hand to her mother.

"I do. Rosalind, I can give you the key to all the doors in that journey."

"Tell me."

"This: the joy of life is love; the purpose of life is achievement through growth. We can welcome obstacles, even the obstacles to love if we believe that. Every obstacle is a means to greater growth—more perfect love."

"Oh. . . ." The word was a soft little wail.

"That doesn't thrill you?"

"No."

Mrs. Karanoff turned to Alice. 'The very thing she's doing, growing through experience, sounds dreary to her! That's what living is!" She had turned back to Rosalind. "Sometime you'll see, darling. . . ."

Rosalind's head was lowered; she was gazing obliquely down into the water where the colored pebbles beckoned. "I said I loved clearness, didn't I? Well, that isn't clear; that's all." She drew her hand from her mother's clasp and turned to look at her canoe that floated at the end of the landing, its cushions bright spots of color against the silvered blue of the lake.

"I guess I'll go think about it, mummy." They both rose. "There's a girl at school who quotes a poem that's really wonderful, but sizzling. It's about two people, they're loving each other, and they oughtn't to. At least they say 'Although we be two sinners . . .' and then it ends something like this, 'Close up the gates of gold! I go not in—If this be sin.' I hate that. I had a regular row with the girls about it."

"You ought to hate it. Love—love worth having—and heaven are the same thing. That's what the poet meant, I suppose."

Rosalind was untying the canoe. "I get you," she said. She had alighted after her philosophic flight. She stepped into the light shell and pushed off from the dock. Her mother watched her a moment before she joined Alice.

"How normal she is! Nothing could be more right than for her to want to get away out there alone. At

that age they can take so little at a time. Do you think she took as much as one step just now?"

"I think she took several," Alice said positively. "And I did too. You do believe that."

"I am learning to believe it."

II

BUNNY COTTRILL was taking Rosalind to a dance at the country club that night, and for the first time in her life she was going alone with a boy in his car. Until this occasion her mother had not allowed her to go without a driver in the evening. The boys came to The Towers in their own cars, but from that point they had had to proceed in one of the Karanoff cars with a chauffeur. It was not her daughter's virtue or her ability to care for herself that her mother doubted, but the trustworthiness of the boy drivers.

That evening after dinner Mrs. Karanoff said that since Rosalind was not to be in the responsible care of a chauffeur, she must report to Alice upon her return from the dance.

Mr. Karanoff looked up with a flash of approval in his eyes. "Just go into Alice's room and speak to her," Mrs. Karanoff was saying. "If I'm awake I'll hear you, and maybe I'll call you to come and see me too. I'll want to know all about everything."

Rosalind made herself as tall as possible and folded her arms about her mother. "Darling, you're to BE

ASLEEP. You mustn't worry about me, and you must spend your nights knitting up the raveled sleeve, you know. No midnight parades on my account."

"I won't sleep till you come," Alice promised. As usual they were conniving for Mrs. Karanoff's peace of mind.

Rosalind, in extravagantly tender mood, her arms still about her mother, was saying, "Do you know what I discovered at school? That other girls' mothers don't come into their rooms in the night like sweet little ghosts. I supposed all mothers prowled in the dark. I think of you just as often as part of the starlight, part of the coolness in my room in the night, as I do sewing little seams for me or looking at dad with that light in your eyes. Oh, you're such a different, dear, funny, sad little mama. You make me have tears." She was kissing the different, dear, funny, sad little face. "Let's dye your hair, mother, and buy earrings for you and make you look haughty and vampish."

"Would you like me better that way?" her mother asked. She was amused.

"Yes. No. NO! I'd like you to *want* to be that way, and then not be it. I want you happy, mother darling!"

"I am happy! I'm happy because you are such a dear daughter and Nico is such a dear boy. . . ."

"Two little angels," Rosalind mocked with a flourish of arms, and flung herself into the Charleston. She snapped her fingers and danced straight at Nico, who made a face of disgust.

"Your legs go so fast you look as if you had four,"

he remarked scornfully. He turned his back on her, and Alice, watching them, thought how different they were save in their intelligence and their fine proud manners.

Nico was strong like his father, ambitious for ambition's sake, striving for a goal that his own insatiable desires ever advanced. Rosalind lived for the joy of the day. Moonlight magic had gone into the making of her, yet she was essentially of the sun. She was ardent, active, winged with light. She had learned self-confidence from her father; she was imbued with sweetness, the misty moonlight sweetness of her mother.

Alice loved her, loved her as she could never love Nico, though Nico was deep in her affections at last. Nico had magnetism, and knew it. He allowed his dignity to be the barrier that shut out affection, and used the magnetism as he used money, to buy his way. Rosalind was perhaps not less magnetic. Alice could not know, for unlike her father and Nico she put no dependence on her own charm, but flung her love and her love of love like a beam of light before her.

Alice was almost asleep when Rosalind came in that night. She was roused by a stir of fragrant garments and the touch of a cool cheek against her own. Half dreaming, Alice held her in her arms and felt the brush of her hair and lashes, the movement of her laughing lips. She was warm and cool, soft and vital. "One o'clock, Alie," she was whispering. "Oh, heavenly night! Alie, wake up. I've got to tell you. . . ."

"Tell me." Alice bestirred herself, and Rosalind laughed out loud.

"Your hair's all funny, and you're half asleep. Alie, don't fail me now. I need you so!"

As Alice sat up, Rosalind rose from her crouching position to sit on the bed. In the dimness Alice saw her slim bare neck and the halo of dark hair against the moonlit window. Her white coat had slipped down on her bare arms; her face was almost indistinguishable. She was laughing again at Alice. "You're all sleepy and curious and afraid something has happened to me. Something has. Oh, Alie, forget that I every said I was in love with Bunny, because now I am really in love. Not Bunny. Please, please don't smile this time."

"Dear, I won't laugh. You know I always think 'This maybe the one. . . .'"

"This *is* the one, Alie! From the first minute, this man was different. I've never said that before, have I? You can't remember a time when I have said that a man just simply was unlike anybody I ever met before so that he . . . oh, he might really *be* a prince trying to look ordinary. Listen . . . Words go so slowly. I was dancing with Bunny, and I saw this man standing over by the door. He was looking at me. It wasn't as if I noticed him looking at me. I didn't. I had my back to him, and for some reason I turned and looked over my shoulder straight into his eyes. It was just as if his eyes had been waiting and waiting for mine to get there. I positively know I didn't express anything in my face. I couldn't have, because I wasn't

feeling anything except blank amazement to think. . . . Anyway in just a minute he cut in. I was so thrilled, but I couldn't let him know, and I said with just the coldest look I could put on, 'When we were introduced a minute ago I didn't hear your name.' I didn't say it till we were far enough from Bunny so that he wouldn't hear. And just as calmly as if I hadn't meant to be sarcastic he said, 'You're mistaken about that. We weren't introduced a minute ago'; (he made a long pause). 'It was several years ago.' Alie, who do you think it was? That *Norris Field* who used to live here. Don't you remember? With a dimple in his chin? I don't remember anything but the vaguest. . . . oh, you know. Just a kid, and now he's absolutely adorable with quiet gray eyes with a spark of something deep in them, and that dimple that you want to put your finger in and the nicest hair. And he says. . . . But wait a minute. Anyway we danced and danced and every time anybody cut in he'd come right back. Bunny gave me a terrible rush and I did wish he *wouldn't,* and so at last Norris and I just went out on the porch and it was moonlight." Rosalind drew her knees up and sat curved like a letter S between Alice and the window. Her soft hands moved restlessly in Alice's clasp, and she emphasized every climax of thought with a little squeeze.

"Where did he come from?" Alice interrupted.

"Oh that's *it!* He just came from nowhere and he's going to nowhere. It can't be true that he's going away! He drove here with his stepmother to visit, and day

after to-morrow he's going to meet his grandfather and drive to Banff. Way off *there*. I want to go to Banff. We've never been there. He said it's in the Rockies and high up and wonderful with lakes and horseback and views. I almost had to put my hands over my mouth not to say, 'Don't go! Don't go away now when you've just come.' Anyway he said to me in the strangest voice, 'I didn't know whether you'd like me or not. There's a feud in our families, you know; I dared a lot when I cut in.' I said, 'What feud?' And he said, 'Don't you know? Really?' And I don't know, Alice. After that he tried to pretend he had been joking and that he didn't mean it, but I know he did mean it. *Is* there a feud?"

"Certainly not a feud, seriously speaking," Alice assured her. "Why, your mother gave a dinner in honor of the Fields when Norris's father came back from France! It was just before they moved away. Your mother was lovely to them. Then later. . . ." Alice paused to weigh her words. There had been an episode that was nothing, and from it had grown something. . . .

"Later. . . ." Rosalind reminded her. "Don't spare me."

"Later when they were to move away from White Falls, Mrs. Field did and said some unkind things about your mother and father. I don't know what they were, but because Mrs. Field moved away there was no chance to smooth them over. When she returned to visit she brought the old unkindness with

her so that there was a break in what had been a pleasant friendship. That's all, I think."

"Then perhaps they'll love to have Norris and me help them make up. 'A little child shall lead them,' you know, Alie. Think of the romance of it! It is romantic. Norris's mother has been dead ever since he was a baby. He told me everything out on the golf course in the moonlight. His mother and he both had scarlet fever and she died. Her name was Ruth and he loves that name more than any other in the world and all girls' names that begin with R. And both his grandmothers died. His grandfather Norris is just darling to him and takes him traveling. He calls him 'Gramp,' and some day he'll leave Norris all his money. Oh. . . ." Rosalind's voice expired in a returning wave of ecstasy.

"When you were just five, Norris was a boy of nine, if I remember rightly," Alice said musingly. "He must be twenty now."

"He is. He's almost twenty-one and of age. He goes to Yale and his father went to Yale and it is just possible that he may study medicine and be a doctor. He hasn't quite decided. His father is a specialist in children and Norris says he is absolutely a prince of a man—his father. He wants to isolate the germ of infantile paralysis. He's working for that all the time. Norris said, 'The only reason I hesitate about being a doctor, too, is because I am afraid I wouldn't be as fine as my dad!' Isn't that sweet of him, Alice? He *is* sweet. Norris is just simply precious and I know it. Oh . . . I wish I had never said I was in love before." She cov-

ered her face with her arms and rocked back and forth on the bed. "I wish I hadn't talked so much. Now when I say that this is really real you just think it's *another* case. Alice, believe me, won't you? I do mean it. I've always liked being in love before, but this is more wonderful . . . and more terrible."

"It sounds real, Rosalind." Alice's arms were about her again; Rosalind's fragrant hair was against her cheek. "It is real while it lasts, but . . ." she paused, and added deliberately, "I hope it won't last."

"Why?" Rosalind flung up her head and tried to look into Alice's face.

"Because of what Norris said: There is an unhappiness between his stepmother and your mother and father. This might worry your mother, and nothing is worth that. I was thinking to-night how careful you and I have always tried to be not to let anything disturb her."

Rosalind moved nearer. "Why is she like that, Alice? Other mothers aren't. They're strong, and they entertain and travel and dress and neglect their children, and do all the things they tell their children not to do. My mother is a little quiet saint; so sweet, so good, so . . . afraid sometimes. Sometimes she's on fire, like to-day. Is it only because she's sick that queer way?"

"Yes, that old deep nervous illness. When it gets its clutch on her it makes her seem afraid."

"I suppose so. Darling mother! Sometimes I try hard to think of my mother dancing in our ball room,

a professional dancer like Pavlova, all young and light and with a flash of something that would get dad by the ears. I can imagine him loving her, and I can imagine her young, but not dancing that way. I can see her playing the part of a nun; or the madonna in The Miracle. Wouldn't she be heart-breaking in that? I'll never be as beautiful as my mother. Alice, am I pretty or just nice and wholesome and young?"

Alice laughed. "You're nice and wholesome and young *and* pretty."

"Oh, thank you. I don't look the least like my father, do I? Isn't it strange?"

"You are something like him, though, when you get on your dignity."

"I think I'm going to get along better with dad now that I am grown up. He was quite respectful to me yesterday and to-day."

"Never think he doesn't love you, regardless of what he does."

"Well, and never think I don't love him. Alice, I adore that man. Really. All the girls know who he is. I'm terribly proud of him. When he comes to the school and takes some of us out to tea I get such a kick. I wouldn't have him different for anything. I think I kind of like him to be disagreeable. I don't like men who grin and are jolly. I don't like jolly people anyway, except to play with. Well, I must go. It's morning. It's morning *now* and I have a date with Norris at nine!"

She rose and slipped out of her coat. "We're going canoeing. I said I'd take him to Clara's. He remem-

bered all kinds of things we used to do. It was Old Home Week. Isn't it strange that I didn't know him the first minute? . . ."

Quite prosaically, Alice asked, "What about Bunny? And Bunny's pin?"

Rosalind had turned toward the door, but she wheeled. "Bunny's pin?" She lifted her skirt with one hand while with the other she pulled the chain of Alice's bedside lamp. Alice blinked a moment before she saw the pearl-encrusted Greek letters. "When I came in from the golf course with Norris I put Bunny's pin down there on my teddy. It will never ride beneath my heart again."

III

WHEN Alice waked, she knew that even if she had to be evasive she would not tell Mrs. Karanoff about Norris. That was Rosalind's right. She felt the utmost sympathy for the girl, for she remembered the fine eyes of the little Norris and the long dimpled chin. Would Mrs. Karanoff take this affair that encroached upon her own wounds, with the same philosophic wisdom she had accorded Bunny and the others? Alice decided that she would, and that her own doubt was more amazing than anything Mrs. Karanoff was likely to do. Yet she found herself almost glad in her first response to the news that Mr. Karanoff was having twinges of rheumatism. She was relieved on Rosalind's

account, for her sick husband would keep Mrs. Karanoff's attention engaged until Rosalind was up and could speak for herself.

After several years of relief, Mr. Karanoff was again having sciatica. He and Mrs. Karanoff had spent most of the winter at White Sulphur Springs. Clara, for whom they had made the occasion a much needed vacation, had been with them for several weeks.

He walked with a slight limp always now, and carried a stick. He was thinner and it seemed to Alice that he had aged unduly. Computing his years she knew that he could not be over fifty-eight, but he looked a grilled and whitened fifty-eight. It was to be expected, for not only had he burnt his candle at both ends; he had cut his candle in two and burnt all four ends in earlier years. He had grown in patience; he was inclined to silence, and yet he was not less disagreeable, nor less bitter. It was, perhaps, that the slowing down of his dynamo gave his shafts less impetus. He seemed at times to be trying to cultivate indifference, but he did not succeed evidently, for his reactions to the effort were vital with concern for his familiar interests. His home, his business, his wife, his children were his world, and though the old desires and passions for the allure beyond that circle flared up to tease his growing inability, he seemed to sink back into the secure groove of domesticity with resignation.

When Alice had seen him during Nico's Christmas and spring holidays, she had observed these signs in him that now, in this week of reunion, she found con-

firmed again and again. He had let go of something that Alice could not name; he had found something. . . . Nor could she name just what it was that he had found.

While Alice and Nico were breakfasting in the loggia that morning Mrs. Karanoff was in the pantry superintending the arrangements of a tray for her husband. She would breakfast with him, and therefore if Rosalind saw her, it would be because she sought her.

At a little before nine Alice heard the happy movements of Rosalind. A snatch of song, staccato feet, a gay sentence thrown over her shoulder as she flew downstairs. She encountered Alice in the hall. "I'm late, Alie. Do I look nice? I haven't time to eat, just some milk."

Alice followed her into the kitchen, assuring her that of course she looked nice. She wore a white pleated skirt as short as her little girl dresses; white pumps, white hat and a red blazer with a white gardenia on its tailored lapel.

"I couldn't go to sleep till after the sun came up. Are my eyes woozey? I took a cold shower. Boy, it was nice!" She drank the milk, one hand over her stomach. "Dear dad, laid up. Alie, I didn't tell mother about Norris just now because there was no time to explain; she'd want to know so much. Do you suppose I could bring Norris home to lunch? I just think I will. I think the way to do with silly old feuds is just to ignore them." She finished the milk and set down the glass. "Anna," to the cook, "have shrimp

salad for lunch and those cheesey things, please, will you? I want to bring a friend home with me."

Alice was certain this procedure was a mistake. As they went swiftly through the pantry she was advising Rosalind: "Bring him in to see your mother before you ask him, dear. Make her a sign that you want to ask him."

Rosalind was on the wing. "Don't worry. I'll fix it." She waved an arm and dashed through the screen to the terrace, where she came up short before a young man who had just lifted his hand to ring the bell. "Oh, here you are!" she cried. "Am I so late? Were you waiting at the boathouse?"

"Yes, I. . . ." He caught sight of Alice through the screen and his face lit pleasantly. "How d'ye do? I remember you." Alice came forward and gave him her hand. "You're Miss Steele, aren't you? I remember when you came here to live."

Rosalind was laughing. "Norris! Are *you* like that? So am I. Her name is Speare, not *Steele!* I do just exactly that kind of thing! Do you remember the meat man at Schultz's? His name was Youngblood. Once I met him on the street and I was so polite. I said, 'How do you do, Mr. Bloodhound?' Meat and bloodhounds! I'm always doing that."

"So am I," Norris declared. "So does my dad. He has the worst time getting his patients' names right. Well, good-by, Miss Speare. . . ."

They went down to the lawn and crossed rapidly toward the boat house—Rosalind's white-shod feet

beautiful on the vivid grass, her red coat blazing like a huge poppy against Norris's light tweed. He wore no hat, and before they had disappeared in the boathouse Rosalind had seized off her white sport hat which Norris took from her and set atop his own brown head.

Their very happiness increased Alice's uneasiness. She had connived with Rosalind a little, and yet, she asked herself, wasn't her very connivance part of her effort to forget, to ignore the things she had seen and heard that she had not been supposed to see and hear?

Mrs. Karanoff had never said that she wanted Norris and Rosalind kept apart. Why, therefore, should she assume that she would not like this sudden friendship?

She went directly to the ballroom where Nico was already at work. The boy could practice three hours at a stretch, stopping only for periods of vigorous exercise. His endurance was not the least part of his genius, Alice knew. His straight back, his heavy shoulders like his father's, were powerful; he was active and he liked such sports as were not classified as games. Riding, hunting, fishing, mountain climbing were his recreation, but he had neither the humor nor the gregariousness necessary to the sports that were limited by rules, or that required the cooperation of others. He played a lone hand always; he would never be a man's man, yet he was the very antithesis of the feminine.

All his life he had had Alice beside him when he

practiced. He had gone far beyond her ken in his study, but he still worked out his problems by stating them to her. Her sympathetic face, her keen, kind eyes were Audience, which, like Public, was a word that linked itself with his ambition. With Audience watching him he could not fail; without Audience sometimes an ugly mood of resentment rode him. He needed the incense of Alice's admiration.

She gave it now, and he turned a flash of understanding eyes to her, then ceased abruptly and shuffled through a shelfful of sheet music for some pages that he set before him. As he began to play with a noticeably added quality of passionate expressiveness that was his response to her mood of Audience, her hands dropped from her *petit point* into her lap. She sat gazing out into the grove, where a long, red bark path led up a gentle slope to a sunny patch that lay like a gold coin among the dark firs and little quivering birches, emerald bright in their tender leafage. At the far end there was a glimpse and flutter of blue—Mrs. Karanoff's madonna blue—coming slowly forward. As the music changed its singing, so the moving blue was altered and dappled first by sunlight, then shadow, and set in brilliant contrast to the green. A breeze played an arpeggio among the leaves.

Alice saw Mrs. Karanoff pause to listen to the piano before her steps quickened and she left the grove, turning toward the sounds that Nico sent ringing to meet her. When she entered the ballroom her face was vivid with feeling, and touched with an azure light

that radiated from her dress to find its blue affinities in her eyes and on her silvered hair.

She stood, arrested in her mobile mood, until Nico finished, then she went to him. "Dearest, that's by César Franck, isn't it? Oh, I love it! When I heard it out there, coming through the grove to me, I remembered that afternoon in Boston when we heard it together. It's like Beethoven—spiritual emotion. Oh, Nico, it made me marvel that anybody should doubt that the soul is really part of God himself, and that it is struggling up, up through beauty like this music and good deeds toward perfection. I never felt it more certainly than just now."

Nico had risen, more responsive to her emotion than to the thought she expressed; his arms were about her waist, her arms about his shoulders. She was looking straight into his black, shining eyes. "You've taught me things, Nico. You're my teacher, often. It wasn't until about the time you were born that I found out that achievement is the only real happiness. I was so glad when I learned that; I planned how I would teach it to you some day and then, before I even knew you were old enough to understand, *you were achieving!* You had been born with that passion, so that I knew we had made our discovery at the very same time, you and I." She laughed and kissed him. "To be worth while, and to do worth while things is just all there is to happiness, but so few people know it, it seems to me."

She stood dreaming a moment, faintly smiling, then: "Well, I must go to my sick man. He's waiting for us

on the terrace. Would you like to have us read *Jean Christophe* aloud, Nico?"

Nico's answer was a swift, leaping flight to the hall door. Before he was well outside he was whistling for his dog.

"Rosalind has disappeared," Mrs. Karanoff went on, taking count of her family. "Do you know where she is, Alice?"

Alice was gathering up her wools. "Yes, Rosalind went to Clara's in her canoe."

"To Clara's? In the morning? She told Anna she wanted to bring a friend home to lunch. Whom do you suppose she is with? Bunny?"

They were on the terrace. Mrs. Karanoff drew a second chair near the table on which Mr. Karanoff's inert arm rested. He lay back in a wicker chaise longue, a gray cap drawn down over his eyes, his stick in his hand. His wife had placed his chair so that it stood half in shadow, half in the sunlight. She rearranged a cushion under his head.

"Would you rather be all in the sun, Nici?" she asked anxiously. "It's pretty hot?"

"I'm all right."

"Nico has gone off with his dog somewhere. I was going to read aloud—*Jean Christophe*. It doesn't matter; he needs exercise. Alice, you and I need to rest. Every time I went up or down stairs this morning I saw you working so hard at your *petit point;* and I have been a busy nurse, haven't I, dear?"

"You have."

Mrs. Karanoff put her hand affectionately over her husband's, and looked straight into his eyes. "I know this weather will make you lots and lots better. Sun like this; and the children here to quicken things." She turned to Alice. "I must be abstracted this morning. Did you tell me that Rosalind had gone with Bunny? I know I asked you."

Alice was certain her voice would not sound quite natural. "No. She went with Norris Field. It seems that he is here on a little visit."

"Norris . . .?" Mrs. Karanoff's eyes turned black in the moment that she said the name and held the sound of it on her parted lips.

Mr. Karanoff had not moved, but his expression had changed as swiftly as his wife's.

"Norris and Mrs. Field arrived yesterday, I think Rosalind said, to visit." Alice hastened to relieve the heavy silence that had fallen like a stone among them. "She met him last night at the country club, and they went this morning to renew old memories at Clara's. It seems that Norris is to join his grandfather to-morrow and go on to Banff. I saw him a moment this morning. He hasn't changed—except that he has! I should say he measures little less than six feet and he has the same clear eyes, and the engaging dimple in his chin."

If Mr. Karanoff would only wink. He was keeping that still, unblinking gaze on his wife, whose face had turned gray with the first touch of her old illness upon her. She made an effort to smile. "I haven't seen Norris

since he was. . . . How old was he when they left here? It was nineteen-twenty. He was fourteen. Then he is twenty now. Of course he would be tall by this time." Her voice had gone suddenly husky. She coughed and put her fingers to her trembling lips.

"He is very attractive, I think," Alice said. "He remembered me, and I should never have forgotten him even if I hadn't seen him again. He was always quite naturally a little gentleman. Wasn't he?"

"I think he was. It was he, then, whom Rosalind wanted to ask to luncheon?" Her voice was clear again; its sweetness had returned. "Norris's grandmother Norris died recently. Poor Norris, he has lost his mother, his grandmother Field and grandmother Norris. . . ." She arose; her brave effort for the commonplace had been made. There was a white ring around her mouth.

"I see Rosalind's canoe." Mr. Karanoff's eyes were on the lake; he had lifted his stick to indicate the space, tree framed, through which the little craft could be seen with two dazzling white figures, both paddling. They were not far out on the lake.

Alice bent lower over her work. She was uncomfortable in Mr. Karanoff's presence. His features had tightened; his sheltered eyes smoldered as he watched his wife, yet he did not move. His inert arm still lay on the table; the stick had fallen down beside him and he did not reach for it.

Mrs. Karanoff returned to her chair and sat looking down at the lake where the canoe would soon appear,

slipping into their range of vision from under the screen of trees.

"I'll go in and see Anna," Alice said. "I'll tell her they're coming." She escaped into the cool house and passed on into the kitchen where Anna was hulling strawberries. The "cheesey things" Rosalind had ordered were ready for the oven.

"I hope them two ain't already filled up," she began complainingly, "It'd be just like 'em to eat all morning. When Miss Rosalind's home I never know if she's going to want a feast or a famine. If she falls in love she can't eat; if she falls out of a sudden, I can't fill her up."

Alice had lifted a strawberry to her lips, but the last sentence struck into her memory, bringing back the sweep of emotion peculiar to those summer days when she had been so in love with George that she could not eat. The emotions of love—excitement and faintness poured over her; her nostrils remembered the scent of George's cigarettes. June days like this day; rapture such as Rosalind had known in the dawn. Hunger was part of the pain of that delight. She had put the untasted strawberry on the table.

When she returned to the terrace she found a simply social scene with Nico and his dog at its center. Rosalind, who was acutely conscious of Norris's eyes, was lavishing too much affection on the animal. She had flung her red coat on the table; her mother was holding her hat.

"Take Norris to your room, Nico," Mrs. Karanoff

said a second time to her son, who showed no inclination to obey.

"Really, Mrs. Karanoff, I can't stay. I oughtn't, you know."

"I ordered lunch before I left—things you'll like," Rosalind put in. "You'll get enough."

"Oh, well, it isn't *that*. . . ."

Mrs. Karanoff's eyes were crying: "Don't urge him!"

Mr. Karanoff's face was a mask.

"They know I do want to stay, Miss Steele . . . Miss Speare, that is, shall I?"

"I would," said Alice, wishing the decision had not been hers.

Rosalind was not behaving naturally; she was overacting her frank, sweet gaiety and struggling for ease. Alice pitied her when she observed her distaste for the food that she liked so especially well. Nor need she have teased Norris about his fear of faring leanly. The boy was almost unable to swallow.

It seemed to Alice that Mr. Karanoff's watchful eyes were saying to his wife, "Poor fool, you. Poor fool."

"And you really like Cleveland so much that you never regret having left White Falls?" Mrs. Karanoff asked Norris in the usual polite talk-making catechism.

"Well. . . ." Norris glanced at Rosalind and they both colored, then Rosalind tried and almost succeeded in looking superior to the emotions of the flirtation. "I have regretted some . . . just lately," he finished. Again his eyes sought Rosalind, and seeing her effort

to play the sophisticate, he at once became attentive to Mrs. Karanoff, directing a stream of amiable talk her way.

"At first Aunt Lyda wouldn't buy a house. We lived in Wade Park Manor—awfully nice of course, but not exactly home. Then one day dad was called to a case at an old house that the people wanted to sell. It's in the country and it has a beautiful ravine that crosses the land in back and then turns so that it runs rather close under the library windows. You ought to see that ravine in the spring when the red maples and the dogwood are out! Really it's like fairyland, and the creek down in the very bottom is quite a husky little stream."

"Trout?" Rosalind inquired.

"Oh, no. Not in Ohio."

"Falls?"

"Yes, it's some little water-fall. It dries up later in the summer. Sometime we'll pipe water into it to keep it going. Dad loves the farming part and Aunt Lyda is forever fixing the house. She doesn't like it though. She despises old things."

"How many acres?" Mr. Karanoff inquired. It was the first time he had spoken.

Norris lifted his glass of iced tea. "Oh, only six."

A suggestion of scorn touched Mr. Karanoff's lips. He looked at his wife; she winced under his hot eyes and Rosalind, seeing the swift and silent drama of their faces, turned in distress to Alice.

Norris, having drunk, again addressed himself to Mrs. Karanoff, who inclined her head toward him.

Her food was untouched, but she held her fork as if at any moment she might begin to use it.

"Dad wants to restore and improve the place just as it is. I mean, keep it old-fashioned and picturesque. Aunt Lyda calls it a patched old thing. You see it has been built on to, and built on to, and the floor levels are different."

"I like that," said Rosalind. "Quaint. Remember the Red Inn at Provincetown, mother?"

"Yes, indeed."

"Quaint," Mr. Karanoff mocked, and looked too bored to laugh at the discomforts tolerated in the worship of the quaint.

"We have an old well with a sweep. There are stones around it and ferns."

"Old oaken bucket. . . ." Rosalind said briskly; and instantly Nico took up the rhythm, chanting disagreeably,

" 'Fungus grown bucket; the germy old bucket that hangs in the well.' "

Norris laughed good-naturedly, his gray eyes darting about the circle of faces. As quickly as it had come his laugh was quiet. He had seen. It was part of his niceness that he had been slow to catch the temper of the scene. He looked startled and ashamed, of a sudden, as he might look if he were caught talking aloud in the midst of prayer.

"I lived in such a house, Norris," Alice said. She had been saving the remark for just this moment when it should be needed. "And I know the charm of old rooms.

I suppose you found some beautiful detail covered by modern decorations."

"Yes." Norris revived under the question. He seemed to feel that the burden of conversation was his. "We did. That was one of the first things dad found. The dining room of the house is square and has a bay window, and a fireplace across one corner. The woodwork was painted to look like oak and it seemed a funny sort of woodwork, flush with the plaster. Dad dug down and found that it had been papered—paper over paper—for so many years that when they got the paper all off, the woodwork stood out a good inch and a half beyond the wall." Norris's face had lost its embarrassment; he seemed not to want to look at Rosalind, and he continued with concentration of purpose like a man running with thought only of his goal.

It was doubtful if they, any of them, actually heard what he said, but afterward Alice could visualize that dining room in gray and white, with blue dishes and old brasses, as a fitting background for the simple and winning personality that was Norris.

IV

WELL, this family has succeeded in carrying on the feud! Norris got the idea all right. Where's mother?"

Rosalind came into the schoolroom, trailing her red jacket, and sat down with a thump opposite Alice. Her

eyes were dark with resentment, her fresh coat of sunburn gave her the complexion of choler. "I'd like to know why *you* thought *you* had to carry it on, Nico. You behaved like a little devil. Why mother lets you come to a grown-up table, I can't imagine."

"You don't say!"

"I do say. Let me tell you one thing, Nico Karanoff. You can't be as disagreeable as dad and get away with it. Dad has fascination, but you haven't. I hate you when you look and act that way—imitating dad."

Nico became vehement. "Well, what did you bring that dimpled darling here for? I'm five years younger than you are, but I know mother wouldn't have his stepmother in this house on a bet. She didn't have to hit me in the belly to make me know that."

"What has he to do with his stepmother? Don't you use language like that to me."

"Language! Belly? Are you objecting to belly? Good English; *old* English. Refer you to Mr. Shakespeare. . . ."

"Oh, keep still!"

"Keep still? You mean about belly? No, she doesn't mind belly. It's Norris she doesn't want to talk about. Why does he come back here visiting? Staying at his step-grandmother's house. If I had a stepmother I wouldn't go visiting around at her heels."

Rosalind had fixed angrily shining and narrowed eyes on him. She nodded as he taunted. When she spoke it was with ominous calm. "Make fun of him; that's right. You're too conceited for any use. Shall I

tell you what he thinks of you? You're a . . . a Jewey Jew in his eyes. That's what you are!"

Nico affected to be too convulsed with mirth for speech. "Listen to my *sister* talk," he gasped at last. "So *I'm* a Jew; and he tells you how he despises me!" The boy was growing angry.

Alice rapped the table. "Now this is enough. Rosalind! Come with me." She went to the door and opened it. "You're excused for the day, Nico, I think you need exercise."

"He needs a beating," Rosalind muttered, but when the door of her room was closed she flung the brilliant jacket from her and fell prone on the bed. Alice sat down beside her. "Rosalind, do you really think Norris felt unwelcome?"

"Think? I know it. We've talked it out. He told me this morning that he thought about our two families all night; that he couldn't sleep. He says his stepmother hates us, but his father is close-mouthed. He asked his father what was the matter, and he said please not to talk about it; that no amount of argument could change his objection to us; that it was fundamental. Norris can't think what it could be except that his father may not like dad for a friend because he's a Jew. Norris was sweet when he told me. I had asked for the honest truth."

Alice felt relief. She caught up the idea. "That *is* fundamental. Race antagonism. If he feels so now, he'll always feel so, and you ought to resent that from Norris. It's ignorant and narrow and you can't argue

ignorance away. You ought to apologize to Nico. Your own brother!"

"Well. . . ." She began to cry. "He was the last straw . . . the things he said. I do hate Dr. Field if he feels that way about Jews. I never think of my father as a Jew. Nor of myself. The Jew part of me isn't. . . . I don't know what." She sat up, and the tears welled from her eyes. "Nico is that kind of a Jew, and I know what I mean even if it is unreasonable. Norris and I are the same kind of people . . . of Americans, and Nico isn't. I thought Norris was wonderful at that ghastly table. If dad wants to keep me loving Norris he'll just stage that sort of scene often and let it show me what a thoroughbred Norris is. You and Norris were the only ones at luncheon who controlled your feelings and carried on."

"Your mother, Rosalind."

"Yes. Acting. White to the lips. She didn't eat one thing. Where is she? Sometimes I wish mother would be less unselfish. If she had taken me in the house and told me Norris mustn't stay for lunch I would have been angry of course, but it would have been better than what happened. Why did she let Norris stay? It wasn't honest."

"Perhaps she thought the most effective way of making you both feel the feud was to show you how, in spite of their sense of hospitality, they couldn't hide their deep-rooted feeling. Hasn't it shown you that a friendship with Norris is impossible?"

Rosalind was silent. She said at last, "Why talk

about it? He leaves to-morrow. Even if I invited him here I can't imagine his accepting."

"Then you have said good-by? You are not to see him again?"

Rosalind went to her dressing table and sat with her back to Alice. She began to pull the pins from her hair. "Yes, I am going to see him again. We're going out in his car now—to the chasm. And then the dance to-night. . . ."

"Which dance is that?" Alice could remember no dance for that night.

"Corny King's. Don't you remember?"

Alice remembered even as Rosalind was saying, "Corny has come back to White Falls to stay. He's to learn the business now, after Cornell and Europe and that big game hunt."

Corny was so much older than Rosalind that until now she had not been included in his invitations. "Are you going with Bunny?" Alice asked absently.

"Oh, of course! Idiot that I was, I gave him dates for two weeks ahead. I can't bear to think of the things he's thinking up to say to-night. Just as if I hadn't changed. I've become a totally different person, Alice." She loosened her hair and tossed and shook it. She pulled off her straight white frock and slip, and stood revealed, a slim goddess, clothed in little more than her own loveliness. She was not thinking of herself nor of Alice's observant eyes. She said slowly, as if she had just perceived an important truth, "Norris is older than I am and bigger and . . . and more controlled . . .

but I'm stronger. I'll be able to make him do what I want him to do."

It was not for lack of answers that Alice was silent.

As Rosalind went swiftly about her dressing for the drive to the chasm her mother came into the room. She was smiling through a gray mask. "Dressing for dinner already?" she asked pleasantly, as if there had been nothing amiss at luncheon.

Rosalind turned from her dresser and tossed a pink garment into Alice's lap. "'Lo, mom. Will you put a new elastic in, Alie? That one has shrunk and it cuts."

Alice examined the elastic. "I'll add a piece to this—about four inches. Right?"

"Right," said Rosalind. She handed Alice her work box. "Have a reserved seat, mommy, I'm going to do my hair in the new lullaby coiffure." She sat down before the dressing table once more.

"What's that?"

"Sweet and low."

Mrs. Karanoff was watching her daughter's reflection in the mirror. There were danger signals in her face. So long as her mother said nothing against Norris, Rosalind would say nothing; but one word of opposition to the affair on foot would precipitate a reckoning on the luncheon scene.

Mrs. Karanoff accepted the terms, and Rosalind's response was given in a spirit of resolute gaiety. Cornelius King's dance was mentioned as if it were the next event on Rosalind's calendar; Rosalind's pink tulle dancing dress was decided upon as the best one for the affair;

Bunny was praised for his promptness in getting Rosalind home on time, and Norris Field, whose gray eyes and white teeth and long dimpled chin were in the vision of both mother and daughter, was not mentioned.

Rosalind brought out a sport frock of yellow crêpe that tied at the neck and tied at the wrists and tied on each hip; she pulled a yellow hat down on the lullaby coiffure and took a brown velvet coat from her wardrobe. So swiftly she moved that she had bent above her mother almost in the same moment that she had selected the coat. She put her fingers under her mother's chin and lifted it. "Darling. I'm going to the chasm for a look. Gorgeous chasm. Do you love your Rozie?"

"You know I do. Rosalind. . . ."

"Say on."

"Do you trust me?"

"Yes."

"My judgment?"

"I do."

"Then I just want to remind you of one thing. Your happiness, your safety, your good—all that concerns you is important to me above everything else in this world. Do you believe me?"

Rosalind looked a little self-conscious. After a pause she asked with a soft air of apology, "Do you mean me to understand that I count more than dad; more than Nico?"

"Must you press me that far, to be satisfied?"

"Well . . . I want to understand. You look so serious. . . . Am I to take you literally?"

An automobile crushed pebbles in the drive.

"Yes. Literally."

Rosalind dropped on one knee and put her arms about her mother's waist. The coat slipped down between them. "Darling. . . . Why should you? I don't deserve it."

"There are reasons why I should. Rosalind, there is nothing, nothing whatever, that I would not do for you."

In the acute stillness, Alice heard Rosalind swallow. "Mother, do you want me . . . not to go to the chasm?"

"I won't ask . . . that. Go on, but be true to yourself and my love for you."

An automobile door was slammed shut.

Mrs. Karanoff rose and Rosalind with her. Their eyes met and the mother smiled. "Go on, and make up for . . . us all at luncheon, and then, never again."

Rosalind kissed her quickly, but stood looking into her face for a moment before she turned, drawing a deep breath. The old gaiety was in her manner once more, in her smile and the lilt of her head, as she waved to Alice.

V

AS on the night before, it was arranged that Rosalind should report to Alice upon her return from the Kings'. She had come in from her drive to the chasm long after the dinner hour, explaining hastily as

she fled towards the stairs, that they had stopped for hot dogs and pop on the way home. "We met Bunny and Corny, and we all forgot about dinner because we weren't hungry," she said.

Alice followed Rosalind to help her dress for the evening. "Was it a jolly crowd?" As their eyes met in the mirror Rosalind's dropped. She wheeled about. "It was a perfect crowd most of the time . . . of two. It didn't need to be jolly."

Instead of a nap which she said she needed, Rosalind took a long, long bath, lying in the hot water with its highly scented salts while she absently floated her rubber sponge as if it were a boat. The retreat into the tub left Alice and her mother, who had joined them, to amuse each other until almost nine o'clock when she would be occupied with dressing, and forgiven for not talking much.

"When you're here I can't remember what I used to do when you were not here," her mother said, as Rosalind returned. "This room is orderly and still and shaded when you're away at school. I sometimes walk through it, thinking how strange it is, and then you come and it's as if the sunshine had burst out from a bank of clouds—a terrific disorder of sunshine as if bombfulls of flowers had exploded." She smiled about her at the silken undergarments, cast like pink flowers on floor and bed and chairs.

"It's absolutely great to be free to drop things anywhere after having to be so careful at school. I like things thrown around. It looks as if somebody were al-

ways waiting downstairs for me. Not a dull moment in which to pick things up."

"And your idea of joy is a grand rush from one event to another—people, people overlapping. No solitude, no time to possess your soul."

Rosalind raised a rebuking finger. "You're wrong," she whispered musically as if she were reciting *vers libre,* "there's morning, after I wake up. When I lie all warm and rested and sniff breakfast, and watch the sun touch things with long fingers. That's when I love the solitude; that's when I possess my soul." She dropped her head back and gave her eyes a dreamy slant. "And then when my darling mother comes peeking around the corner and says rather loud, even if my eyes aren't closed, 'Oh, so you're awake!' and sends for breakfast to be brought up so that I'll forgive her—that's when I'm glad there is no crowd and no hustle and no people overlapping."

"That's a hint for more breakfasts in bed," Alice said.

"A bit of palaver," Mrs. Karanoff agreed.

"It's the poetry of morning," said Rosalind.

Alice did not sleep that night while she waited for Rosalind. Promptly at one o'clock the lights of Bunny's car slanted up the hill, and immediately after Rosalind had been escorted to the door, Bunny returned and drove slowly away.

Alice threw her light dressing-gown around her and went into the hall. She would join Rosalind downstairs and make her some sandwiches while they talked things

over, but after a few steps on her way she drew back, for leaning on the banister, a small white ghost in the dimness, was Rosalind's mother. Alice returned to her room and closed the door softly. As she paused irresolute for a moment, she caught a glimpse through the window of someone moving on the lawn. She went forward and knelt by the sill. It was Rosalind running along by the drive down the hill toward the gates. Alice whistled softly, their call that for a dozen years had been as familiar in Rosalind's ears as her own name. Rosalind stopped and wheeled about. Softly Alice called through the megaphone of her circling hands.

Rosalind stood arrested, listening, then her white arm shot from under her Spanish shawl in an expressive gesture. "Stay where you are," it said to Alice, "I am not to be stopped." She turned and ran on down the hill.

For a long time Alice waited there, watching in the hope that Rosalind, so impulsive, and so sweet in her relenting, would come running back, repenting her flight; and expecting Mrs. Karanoff, who must be alarmed, to come into the room. But no one came; there was no sound from the hall or the grounds save the usual creakings, the soft twittering and tweaking of small living things. The grounds were dark, for as Alice calculated it the moon would not rise for another hour yet.

It seemed to Alice that Rosalind must be near her; she felt her presence as if she were hidden by the black spruces perhaps not a hundred feet away. Surely Rosa-

lind would not prolong a forbidden rendezvous. She knew Alice would be counting every moment until she came back; that it would mean a return to the surveillance of a chauffeur if her mother knew of it. How did she dare to risk so much of her freedom for a boy who would be gone in the morning, perhaps never to return?

Finally Alice decided to go out into the grounds. Rosalind was her responsibility, and she must either find her or report her flight.

She went softly downstairs. The house was as still as sleep itself and dark, save for the dim light from a pair of sconces in the lower hall.

Alice unlatched the door and ran out into the drive. She peered and listened, and saw only still shrubbery and trees that seemed to be sleeping in the windless night. As she walked down the drive she heard far sounds from the direction of the little city, and close by, soft stirrings as elusive as the fragrance and the cool breath of the earth. The Towers gates were closed. To be sure they could be opened easily enough, but as it happened, Alice had never seen them when they were closed before. It was the night watchman's work to shut them and lower the iron bar at midnight. The grim looming grille gave Alice a sensation of finality as if Rosalind were barred from her home. She went to them, lifted the long latch, and moved one gate merely to prove to herself that they were not locked against Rosalind, then she turned back through the grounds, calling softly, whistling again and again their special little

warble; but there was no response. Fearing that even her muted signals might wake Mr. Karanoff, she chose a point of vantage and settled herself on the grass to wait. It was damp and cooler than she had supposed possible after the hot sun of the day. She cuddled herself in her coat and closed her eyes, still expecting Rosalind to come running to her, laughing and penitent and irresistible in her sweetness.

Why Mrs. Karanoff had not spoken in the hall she did not try to guess. She was sick; she did strange things. It might easily be that, after her confession of the afternoon, she simply had not the strength to face Rosalind's insubordination through. . . .

Alice almost nodded there; then she started up, realizing that if Rosalind had been inside the grounds all the time, walking with Norris she might have entered the house on the other side. She found her knees stiff when she tried to rise and she limped slightly as she returned to the great door and went in. The light still burned; the house lay as inscrutable as a dead face. Alice went into the drawing room, and turned on the lights. Immediately the sparkle of some of Rosalind's things caught her eye. On a little table lay her beaded bag and a large pink flower dripping with rhinestones that had come off the shoulder of her dress.

Hastily she ran up to Rosalind's room, but it, like herself, was waiting. Soft luxuries were prepared for her—the open bed, quilted slippers, silk pajamas; fresh, caressing things that would kiss her tired little body to sleep.

Alice yawned, but the yawn was arrested midway by a glimpse of the small enameled clock ticking its tireless record of delinquency. It was showing twenty minutes after two. *After two!*

Lenient though she was where Rosalind was concerned, aching and anxious, she went downstairs determined that Rosalind should meet stern authority when she came in.

VI

IT was half past three when two figures, Rosalind wrapped in her fringed shawl and Norris, whose shirt front caught and held the moonlight in dazzling whiteness, came slowly up the hill, arms locked, their heads close together. Rosalind's face was lifted, Norris's was lowered in an attitude as expressive, as ancient as the moon itself, in whose light their lunacy had flowered. They did not linger too long at the door. Rosalind came in almost at once, blinking in the bright light that Alice switched on as she rose to meet her.

It was not difficult for Alice to look as severely disapproving as she felt, but it was impossible for her to hold the expression when she saw Rosalind's face. It was wet with tears, quivering with emotion. The gay, sweet impudence and winsome repentance that she had expected had no place in that countenance of grief and passion. She had flung up a bare arm to shield her eyes from the brilliant light, but she did not try to cover

her face. She looked steadily at Alice and the tears flowed faster. Alice dimmed the lights and Rosalind, willing to be led, followed her to a far corner of the drawing room, where she sank down on a love seat.

Save for Alice's low soothing murmur no words were spoken. Rosalind cried, sobbing, coughing; she tried to talk, but could not for several minutes. Perceiving that her tenderness was loosening, rather than checking the flow, Alice ceased her soothing efforts and sat inexpressive save for an occasional involuntary little pat.

Suddenly Rosalind drew a deep breath and spoke. "It doesn't make the least difference how I am punished for this. I'll never regret it. It had to be. Alice. . . ." A childish sob choked and shook her. "It isn't just being in love. We had things to say—a whole world full of things to tell each other, and only to-night to say them in!"

She began to cry again. "You'll think he said something terrible to make me cry like this, but he didn't. He didn't. . . . It was the thought of mother and all the sadness of everything. Alice, something is breaking my heart and I don't know what it is. I'm lost and frightened. Those things mother said this afternoon. There was something deep, deep behind them. I told Norris. . . . I want to tell you. Hold me tight, or get cross so that I'll stop crying. Oh. . . ." She pressed her hands hard over her face until she succeeded in controlling her sobs. At last she turned toward Alice, here eyes swollen, her mouth stretched by weeping.

"We've said good-by. It's over forever. . . . The

loveliest thing that ever happened to me is ended! You think that's just romantic talk, but it isn't. That awful something, without words, without action, that happened at lunch made us know each other so much faster than if it hadn't happened. This morning we were kids with a crush. We were jolly, and yet not jolly enough because it hurt. . . .I guess we both wished we were past that part of it and then—luncheon! And Norris so sweet about it. I've been brimming with tears ever since that moment; you know the moment. Mother so white! She looked as if dad were striking her, and as if she deserved it, and yet she was trying so hard for my sake. And dad. As if he wanted to kill somebody, but instead somebody was killing him. Their eyes. I saw. Norris saw. We tried to talk about it this afternoon at the chasm, and we decided that maybe it was like *Jon* and *Fleur* in *The Forsyte Saga.* Maybe my father once loved Norrie's mother and was horrid about it like *Soames.* And maybe it made heartache and jealousy that still hurts them all. We think it must be something like that. . . .

"The chasm was so wonderful. The black mysterious water. The roaring falls that Norris said were like fate, and us. . . ." She stopped to sob again, but stammered, "us, like . . . like leaves on the water. Norris said our happiness was like the little flowers that grow out of rocks there, soon to die, never to be forgotten. . . . At the dance to-night. I knew that I hadn't told him enough about mother and dad. How darling they are to me; how *much* I love them."

The crying was renewed with fresh force, and through her tears Rosalind managed to burst out: "I shouldn't have worn this darn dress to-night. It made me so popular that I couldn't dance with Norris two minutes at a time. Somebody always cut in."

Alice began to laugh, and in a moment Rosalind was laughing with her; she outlaughed her and barely saved herself from hysterics.

"Well. . . ." She took up her memories again. "Kings' ball room was so glaring. No good place to sit out, so I told Norris I'd have Bunny take me home right after supper, then he could come for me and we'd go to the chasm."

"Again? Just now?"

"Yes. Our chasm. It never was so wonderful as when I sat there feeling our mystery and its mystery. I didn't begin to cry till just a little while ago. I told him I needed to tell him how darling my mother is; and how sweet, and kind of pathetic, dad is when you know him as I do, and how he seems so lonely and locked up about something. And mother. . . . What she said this afternoon. Why should she love me so much? Love like that makes you ache in a way . . . in a way that is awful. And yet I *know* . . . something tells me that I'm going to hurt her, and I'd rather die." The last words were broken by a sob.

Alice was shocked by the continued emotion. The tearless, the debonaire and resolute Rosalind was drowning in a pool of tears. It amounted to illness. She put firm hands on the bare shoulders and com-

manded a firm voice. "Now see here, Rosalind. Face the truth and stop talking extravagant romantics. If you'd rather die than hurt your mother, you won't hurt her. You ought to say that and mean it. Don't play with any such wild thought as that fate is going to make you do something you don't want to do. This affair with Norris is merely a summer night's dream. Wake up. You wouldn't think it half so interesting if you didn't know about this thing we have been so foolish as to call a feud. Your parents simply do not like the Fields; they don't want their friendship. There is no mystery, no romance in it whatever. . . ."

Rosalind interrupted. "I knew you would say such things, even though I told you last night that before I even knew who Norris was I was startled by something . . . when we looked at each other. If any other strange man had cut in as he did last night I would have given Bunny a signal not to leave me, but I didn't want Bunny to know. Stranger or no stranger, I wanted to dance with Norris. All that was before I had the slightest idea of any trouble. Don't you remember?"

"Yes. . . . But even so, *Norris—is—forbidden.* Aren't you woman enough by this time to accept the fact of it as final, and forget it? The world is full of charming men."

"Alice, you do me an injustice." Rosalind's tears were dried by the heat of her resentment. "I *have* accepted it as final. I told Norris that I couldn't, that I wouldn't disobey my mother, and we have said good-by. That is one reason why I couldn't help crying. If you

can't understand I shall regret that I told you." She rose. "Shall I tell all this to mother? Confess? Or . . . what?"

"Take your cue from her. If she doesn't ask you any questions, don't talk about it. If she does, tell her the truth."

"I'd rather tell her than not! I'm not ashamed of one word of it."

Alice maintained her rigid demeanor. "One thing," she said severely because only by severity could she help Rosalind control herself. "Did you talk about yourselves as lovers? Did Norris—in spite of what he knew of your situation—urge anything?"

Rosalind sat down again and stared before her, abandoned to memories. She looked limp in her bouffant gown like a bouquet of wilted flowers in a perky paper fill. "No. . . ." she said slowly. "We didn't even say the word . . . love. We said . . . friends—that we couldn't be friends. It wasn't the things we actually said that mattered. It was . . . everything else. You must surely know."

"Yes. I know." Unshed tears burned in Alice's eyes. How well she knew. How she sympathized to the point of pain. It might be, oh, so easily she could imagine it, that Rosalind would never love anybody else as she now loved this boy. This was not love of love; it was the sharp cantact of complementing currents; arresting; imperative; and to deny it was like denying the call of hunger and of thirst. *They had not said the word love!* It was pitiful. So young, so fresh from childhood

that the lovely syllable held embarrassment for them even in their ecstasy. It was impossible not to melt to the child, who wept more for her mother's inexplicable sorrows than for herself.

Alice sat down beside her again and took her cold hands. "Rosalind. Your mother told you to-day that you are the dearest thing in life to her. And I want to tell you that you are that to me, too. If I can find a way for you and Norris, I will do it. That is a promise. I will seek, I will use all my talents to help you if it is right that you should have help. I have little hope, but that shall not keep me from trying for your sake."

"You liked Norris. I saw that you did."

"I did. I do. He is just the same little boy I first knew, grown bigger, and I liked the little boy. He is like his father. Many women have loved his father, I believe." She had almost to bite her tongue to keep from adding—"And he loved your mother." The two children had decided that the mystery concerned Mr. Karanoff and Norris's dead mother, and there was no use in contradicting that conclusion in which they must have found a degree of romantic comfort.

Rosalind said, "I don't remember Dr. Field very well, but I don't believe I liked him. Didn't he always look at me a lot?"

"Everybody always looked at you."

"I know, but . . . not the way I mean. I remember queer feelings."

Alice passed a hand over her smarting eyes. "Let's go up," she said. "I'm very tired." Forcibly she shut

out the wedge-like thought that Rosalind's memory had stirred. They must both of them run from that direction, from the thing Alice had determined she would not allow herself to believe.

VII

JUST what passed between Rosalind and her mother the next day Alice did not know exactly. It was not until noon, when Rosalind waked from the sleep of exhaustion, that they met.

Mrs. Karanoff, with her excessive reticence, had kept silence, yet she had been awake, waiting, all the time Alice and Rosalind were together.

When Rosalind had been helped to bed, soothed and kissed and prayed for by Alice, who sat at her bedside until she heard the tranquil breathing of deep sleep, Mrs. Karanoff stole from her room.

Alice was so weary herself, and so close to sleep, that the next morning she remembered Mrs. Karanoff's ghostly presence in her room as a symbol of her own troubled thought.

Bending above Alice she had whispered her anxious questions—the question Alice had been asking herself before Rosalind came home. "Is she rebellious, or does she yield. . . . ?" And "Does she believe in me? Does she trust me in this matter?"

Alice thought she must have answered for she seemed to remember making a last sleep-heavy effort to say:

"Tell her the truth. Give her your confidence. . . . Full confidence."

Yet they met the next day on the usual ground of concern for the lesser issues of the family life. Alice was exasperated that daylight and their physical habits could repress them so. She wanted Mrs. Karanoff to say: "Alice; Rosalind; I am going to tell you both the whole story of our trouble with the Fields that you may judge for yourselves in the matter." Such behavior would have made Rosalind her very *alter ego*. Rosalind deserved the truth and would have responded loyally to the confidence. Instead, Mrs. Karanoff made no reference to the day before, nor to the night. After her talk with Rosalind she said to Alice, "We must plan activity for Rosalind, to keep her mind occupied. She shall have freedom. We must help her. I think the yacht is our best instrument. If she has a party for a cruise, or something like that."

On the second day after her night of tears Rosalind expressed a pensive wish to live in the guest house alone.

Alice was certain that she wanted to write letters that she would perhaps never mail, or a passionately romantic diary that would be the outlet for her expressiveness, yet when her mother consented, Rosalind lost interest in the guest house and instead went out of the grounds in her roadster. She drove hatless, top back, alone for half the day and in the afternoon she rode her horse, Silver, into the woods, through wildernesses of tangled back country, to the far chasm, where her

little drama had been staged. She made peace with Nico that evening and went with him into the ballroom where the piano drew him after dinner.

"Nico, if I could play as you can, I could make the most stupendous symphony. I wish I could make you feel it."

"Sit down and play it yourself. Just put out your hands and shut your eyes and listen to yourself. Go on. Your hands will go to the right keys."

Rosalind sat down before the piano looking at it as if she expected to see some special mark on the keys that would be a sign to guide her. Then she stretched forth her hands and closed her eyes. Nico, beside her, closed his too, and Alice could see emotion welling into their faces. "Now," said Nico. Rosalind struck firmly, produced discord, and peeked at the keys while she felt for the familiar C chord. She found it, and struck again.

"Oh, God! No!" Nico cried. He elbowed her off the bench and sat down. "Like this!" He closed his eyes and threw back his head in a listening attitude. His hands descended, and notes like the throbbing of a brimming heart filled the room. Again; again and again; crescendo, pianissimo, a rippling minor like the dropping of tears. . . .

Rosalind cried out—"Nico! Don't. How did you know? It does feel like that!" She covered her face.

Nico wove his way in silver and gold until, with no more change than an effective transition, he was in the midst of the Kreisler-Rachmaninoff *Liebeslied*. Its

heart-melting harmonies wept from the piano, and then abruptly he stopped. "Don't you feel how to do that, Roz?"

"No. I don't, but that's what I'd play if I could! Do some more."

She sat down on the bench, her back toward Nico's right side and waited expectantly for the first notes; but Nico was looking at the back of her bowed head. He was perplexed.

"You can take it from me," he said confidently, "I know how you feel before I've ever felt it. I don't see why you can't play it, if you can feel it."

"I can drive the car better because of what I feel; I can ride Silver better." She turned around, and the brother and sister looked at each other with wondering eyes. "We aren't alike," Rosalind said after the mutual scrutiny. "You're dad, and I'm mother."

"Then you ought to be nicer to me," Nico observed. "She's nicer to dad. . . ."

For the yachting party, which was not suggested for several days, since it would seem too obviously a palliative, Rosalind first named three girls living at far points of the country who were her best friends at Miss Belden's.

"It's to be exactly as you want it, Rosalind, but I had hoped you would invite the sons and daughters of our old friends here," her mother said.

"Corny King, I suppose," Rosalind said with an edge of bitterness. "I've been waiting for you to tell

me that Corny was . . . suitable for me. Merging of the paper mills."

Mrs. Karanoff looked straight into her daughter's darkening face. "Don't feel sorry for yourself, darling. Self-pity is a horrid thing. I care nothing for the merging of the paper mills, but I do like Corny. I thought that you did too."

Rosalind shrugged. "If he were anybody but Corny you'd say he was too old for me. He's twenty-four." She turned upon her mother a face that relaxed, gradually, as if it were illumined by the cold, slow fire of a winter sunrise. Her eyes half closed. She had some reckless plan; Alice felt it with certainty. "I think you're right," she said, nodding deliberately. "I will have a White Falls crowd."

That evening after dinner she made exact plans, while Alice and she, alone on the terrace, culled the choice names from her list. Cornelius King seemed to be the one chosen for her own opposite. She would not consider Bunny. Bunny was in love with her and that would bother her. She did not say as much, but she implied to Alice that it would be interesting to see Corny, whom she had always known, discover the Rosalind that Norris and Bunny loved. "Until this summer Corny has thought I was a kid. He's never seen me . . . like this," she said.

"Would it help you to know that you had made someone else suffer?" Alice asked her.

"I know the answer you want me to make, and I know the answer that would make you sorry. If you'll

wait a minute I'll decide which one I feel most like giving you."

Alice laughed, but she was not amused. "Why waste time? Why not answer truly so that we can have a friendly little quarrel, or maybe a little love feast?"

"Don't want to quarrel; don't want a love feast. Besides, you know perfectly well what the answer is. I don't want to hurt anybody any more than I want to be hurt, but biting something that won't slap back is a temptation."

'That is what I meant. It would help."

"I'm resisting one million temptations every hour of my life. I guess if I yield to one it will still be a fair average."

"Rosalind, are you talking about Norris? Do you care that much?"

"I care that much." The voice was convincing. "My throat. . . ." She put her hand to her throat. "It aches all the time. . . . If I could watch Corny King feel as ghastly as I do it would keep me from . . . I don't know what." She knocked her two clenched hands together. "I wait and wait for you three to help me; to tell me. You promised to help me and you haven't. Mother gives me *blaa* reasons about the Fields. I went to dad as man to man, and asked him for the truth, and if you think I'm bitter and horrid and wanting to bite you should hear him. He hates the Fields. He drove me out of the study."

"Rosalind, your father. . . . I could say so much! He has suffered dreadfully in his life. Such a shamed,

bitter childhood. He has it in him to be the strongest and tenderest man in the world because he's suffered, but he doesn't know that tenderness is strength. He represses his tenderness as a thing to be ashamed of. I don't want to see that kind of reaction in you, dear. Let your pain make you kind, make you compassionate!"

"Kind? Compassionate? Why should you expect me to be better than my father? How does he, or mother, help me to be better? Dad expects me to obey blindly; he offers me his hate. Mother wants me to trust her, and yet she doesn't tell me the truth; I *feel* that she doesn't. *You* don't keep your promise."

Alice sat biting her lip. How dared she keep her promise so long as the horrible suspicion that lived deep within her could not be exorcised? She felt a wave of resentment against herself and her employers. "Rosalind! I admire your spirit of battle. You're fighting for what you want, but you're condemning, and that is *verboten*. You and I and your mother have agreed that we will not live in the law of condemnation."

"I realize that perfectly, but mother lives in it toward the Fields."

"I have not seen that. How does she condemn them? Think of the spirit of her talk about them."

Rosalind began a review of such scraps of the Field-Karanoff history as she had heard from her mother, from Clara, from Norris, and ended by further condemning on her own account. "That Lyda woman simply lied, that's what she did, and her husband just didn't stand up and tell the world the truth. But any-

way, what has it all to do with Norris and me? He isn't Lyda's son."

"Let's not try to unravel it, Rosalind. Let's just look at one fact: your mother has a peculiar illness; of a sort that makes nightmares out of very flimsy things. Anyway, she didn't condemn, did she, when she talked about the Fields?"

"Well . . . no. She didn't. All right, then I'll snap out of it. How about your promise?"

"My promise has failed because I, too, am still in the dark. When I made that promise my intention was to try to help your mother see that perhaps you need not share her prejudices. I didn't realize then that it would be so difficult. Your mother is excessively reticent." Alice paused. She wanted to go on and give Rosalind something else to brood upon. She decided to dare it.

"When I first came here, when you were four, I saw at once that your mother was carrying a spiritual burden. She did not try to conceal it. Instead she said, with her characteristic indirection, that Clara would tell me all her history some time. Then she made an opportunity for Clara to tell me. The important thing was a story about your father. . . ."

"You mean that man who killed his uncle, and blamed it on dad? I know *that* tale. Everybody knows that! It breaks mother's heart to think dad didn't share the money with that nephew; she's afraid and sorry. I adore her for it. My mother knows what it means to be an honest-to-goodness loyal wife. Dad's sins are her sins; she married him and all his past and future, and

she worships the very ground he walks on! I told him so."

"You did? What did he say?"

"He said it was true. He looked. . . . well, it made me think this: that even love like theirs, tight bound, beautiful, terrible, isn't the heaven you think it ought to be."

"No. . . . Of course; yet isn't it better than the other thing? Better than the choice that was thrust on me—'to lie down with my thirst and my hunger'? You are having thirst and hunger thrust upon you—so far. There's much to be said for it; it's the heart of a great philosophy. I know an artist who lives it; she's the happiest person I know. She's dependent on her work for her living, yet when a drawing or a sketch is returned to her by some editor she receives it with rejoicing because she says it is opportunity to conquer disappointment, and to do better work."

"Cheerful idiot! That's just plain *dumb.*"

Alice smiled her sympathy. "Rejoicing in failure, because it means real success ultimately, is beyond you?"

"Yes. I want joy . . . joy . . . joy." Rosalind lifted her arms and threw back her head. She was reaching, reaching for the unattainable.

"You will have it—ephemeral joy. And when the pursuit of it palls on you you'll understand the compensation of thirst and hunger."

Rosalind lowered her arms from their ecstatic longing and dropped into her habitual poise—straight, fleet, courageous. Her eyes were on Alice in a long, unsmiling look of understanding and affection. She turned

and walked down the terrace, but wheeled and came back. "I don't want to hurt Corny King, and I'm not so conceited as to think I can hurt him," she said abruptly. Again she walked away and this time without looking back. She crossed the lawn down the hill to the water where she untied her canoe and stepped in.

Alice sat watching the little craft against the sunset as it made long creases in the watered silk of the lake.

VIII

JUST how Corny King fared on the cruise, Alice did not know until September when the family were united after the various vacation trips of the summer.

At first, Rosalind seemed her old self to Alice save for the purposeful look that had dawned in her face on that occasion when she had contemplated the subjugation of Cornelius King. "I suppose," Alice said, hinting ignobly, "that since the cruise, the houses of Karanoff and King are connected by a straight, new path."

For a moment Rosalind looked puzzled, then she remembered that remote time of temptation. She smiled faintly as at the foolishness of another person. "Corny is a good egg," she pronounced soberly, "all that an egg should be." And added thoughtfully, "I don't believe any girl would ever see Corny King suffer. He isn't that kind."

"A good kind." Thus did one say the word that

would support Mrs. Karanoff in her choice for her daughter.

Rosalind said, "He makes me think of something dad told me once—a good rule of his that he passed on to me. I guess Corny knows it too. 'Never show a wound.'"

The words were like the drawing aside of a curtain. Alice said, "One can't always hide scars," but she was seeing the mental and spiritual Rosalind at that instant. The child was striving to be stoic. Her brisk, brusque manner and the personality that was sweet and tonic like the stinging scent of her own bath salts, was no more evident to loving perception than the wounds that had not yet become scars. The bright chiffon of her gaiety veiled their disfigurement, that was all. Hers was the passionate madness of young love, destined to die perhaps, but never to be dead. In it was immortality.

Alice held that drawn-back curtain while she said, "You are being brave about yours, Rosalind. I see that."

"Well . . . don't tell me. I don't want to be heroine stuff."

"Of course you don't."

"Besides I'm not. I know a way out." Rosalind's voice, like a taut cord, had drawn the curtain back into place. "I had a letter from Norris," she said, without expression of feeling. "It was all right for him to write it. It was about his grandfather; he's awfully sick. He was taken sick at Banff. Norris was all alone with him, and they had the car. It was awfully hard for Norris

to know what to do. He said that Banff was such an expensive place to be sick in. Dr. Field had to go out there and bring Gramp home while Norris drove the car back. Dr. Field thinks Gramp will die."

"Oh, I'm sorry! Did you answer Norris's letter?"

"Why, certainly!"

"And has he written again?"

"No." The tone was almost harsh with repression. She held a tight-lipped silence before she said, "Norris's sense of honor will hold water. I know that."

She was wanting to feel hard because a justified resentment was costing her a summer's ecstasy. Alice concentrated on the characters of the two children, for she could think of them as little else than that. Norris was the amenable one; Norris yielded to authority. Rosalind was the wilful one, and in this case she persisted in her rebellion because she knew that she must fight both for herself and Norris.

Her respect for Corny seemed to have deepened, for to say that he was "a good egg; all that an egg should be" was to say much. He doubtless had earned the encomium by his failure to grovel before Rosalind. Alice thought of his strongly-built, well-proportioned body and his dark head so set that, to one experienced in character study, he hardly seemed of the stuff that would be vulnerable to the darts of such archery as the young Rosalind's. He was a mature twenty-four, and he had, in unusual degree, a cool self-possession. His eyes were quick to smile, but they were shrewd; his square chin was firm yet not pugnacious; his eye-

brows were straight and low set in a way that gave him a thoughtful mien. Alice had seen his understanding amusement together with his fascinated interest in Rosalind's maneuvers.

IX

THE day before Rosalind was to return to Miss Belden's she watched long and impatiently for the mail. She was expecting a letter from Norris, for Gramp's illness gave him a proper excuse for writing; and when she saw the postman coming up the drive with a handful of letters she ran down to meet him.

Alice saw her shuffle through the pack and then drop down in the shade where she read avidly. When she finished the several large pages she sat very still, a bright rose heap upon the green.

Rousing, she reread the letter, then she rose slowly and walked toward the house.

A few minutes later she entered the schoolroom and put the letter into Alice's lap. She took the chair opposite, and again sat still and thoughtful while Alice read:

Dearest Rosalind,

My grandfather died last night. I can't believe it because it seems to me that he's right near me and that he knows how badly I feel. He died just as if he were asleep and suddenly stopped breathing. Dad told me

he wouldn't last the night and so I sat there beside him and watched. Once his eyes opened and I stood up and spoke to him, but his eyes looked strange as if he didn't know where he was or who I was. Then he closed them and sank down, and he never looked at me again.

Except for my father he is the last person left in the world who was blood related to me. My mother and my grandfather Field both died when I was too young to remember, but my two grandmothers and Gramp have died lately. I suppose I ought to be used to it, but I'm not. It's a terribly big thing—death, Rosalind. I hope you'll never know anything about it the way I do.

I want to tell you how fine Aunt Lyda is to me these days. She just racks her brain, I guess, to think of something she can do to show me she's sorry, and dad as usual is the best there is, but I am thinking about you and wishing I could take you in the roadster out to our chasm and talk about things—about what happens when we die and things like that. It's pretty serious.

When Gramp was first sick at Banff he told me I was his heir and that I would have everything. I'll be twenty-one in September and independent. If I want to be a doctor, now is the time for me to know it. I won't inherit much, but I'll be able to study anywhere for as long as I please; I'll never have to send poor people bills because I need money to live on, and of course I know from what my father says that that is the ideal state for a doctor. I'd talk about that with

you if we were at the chasm. A doctor has to give a lot, and then take criticism for his pay pretty often, but the way I feel to-day I'd be willing to stand the criticism if I could do for other people what my dad is doing for me.

I'm hoping this is going to make him willing to tell me the whole truth about the thing that matters between us. I can't believe he won't some day soon, for he's never treated me like this before—demanding that I obey blindly just because he says I must. I suppose he'd object to my writing this to you but I know that beautiful little mother of yours wouldn't, considering how I feel to-day. We're going to take Gramp to East Orange to-night and bury him by grandmother and my mother. We have some awfully serious hours ahead of us and you know how I'll be feeling, but just the same I'll be thinking of you, Rosalind, as much as ever—all the time. It's as if you were right beside me as close as breathing, and yet I can never touch you. I long for your hand . . . but there's nothing—Oh, Rosalind, you beautiful little sweetheart, I want you. Write to me this once. Forget our troubles and the mysteries and tell me what you think about my being a doctor. If things come out the way I AM DETERMINED THEY SHALL, *it will be as important to you as it is to me.*

Yours forever, no matter what,
Norris.

When Alice looked up from the letter she saw that Rosalind's eyes were drowned in tears. "I feel old

enough to be his mother, Alie. Doesn't that letter just make you know that I am? I'm more worldly wise than Norris, and he's almost four years older, and he needs me. I'd know what to say to him."

"What would you say to him, dear? Tell me."

"I'd tell him that all the people who loved him—Gramp and his mother and both the grandmothers who were so darling to him—are living somewhere, somehow. I'd tell him there *is* a heaven and a God who'll make them happy, and that they were waiting for Gramp. That's what he wants; somebody like me to tell him. Having the minister and his father say it isn't the same as if I said it, because I'm modern. *You* know! I'm going to write him the most wonderful letter I ever wrote in my life and not feel ashamed to just say what I feel." She straightened, her eyes shone through bright tears, her face was quickened by her resolution. "Can't I order a bushel of flowers sent to him, Alie? Do I have to tell mother? Roses would be more like the way I feel even than a letter."

A flame of love blazed up in Alice's heart, and pity for the youth there before her shaken with a righteous passion of tenderness and love yet denied the truth, denied the right to yield to the impulse of roses. Her slim, curved body and tremulous face were so beautiful in line, in expression and color, that Alice, groping for a simile, discarded the lily and the rose as far, far from adequate as symbols of the loveliness that was Rosalind.

"I'd like to send him dozens of pink roses with blue

delphinium. He'd know I was thinking true blue—promising I'd be true blue to him—and that the roses were for my. . . ." She bit her lip on the last word and stood with tear-veiled eyes fixed on space. One bare arm was raised and the back of her hand pushed the hair off her forehead. For the moment she was touched with the immobility that follows emotion. When she roused she said sweetly with resignation, "Well. . . . I suppose I'll have to ask mother, unless you think it will be all right anyway. I wouldn't charge them if I didn't tell her."

"Would you like me to tell her?"

"I don't want to wait." Her body straightened. "I want them to go *now*. He's back at home now probably. I want him to know I'm . . . with him."

"Then I'll tell your mother."

Rosalind's expression changed swiftly from tears to purpose. "Tell her I have already sent them. Don't bother her to decide, because no old feud is going to influence me when it's a matter of death!"

Alice found Mrs. Karanoff writing letters. "I'm sorry to disturb you," she began smiling, as if to say her errand was not particularly important. "Rosalind received a letter this morning from Norris. His Grandfather Norris is dead and he was feeling very desolate. Rosalind had the impulse to send him some roses. She knows I am telling you." Alice moved as if to leave, but Mrs. Karanoff said, "Wait." She had put down her pen and she bent her head to rest on her right hand.

"Rosalind had a letter from him a few days ago, didn't she?"

"Yes . . . to say his grandfather was dying."

"Alice, is my opposition drawing them closer, or is this renewed correspondence something of a formality?"

Alice hesitated. It seemed neither to her, and she said so. "They are really in love—very youthfully and beautifully, but like disease it has to run its course. They are behaving with dignity and respect for authority, it seems to me. Even if they understood fully and agreed themselves that their love is hopeless, I think they still would be in love a while longer."

"The flowers will fan the flame."

"Time will cool it."

Mrs. Karanoff did not reply, and after a moment Alice ventured a pointed question: "If the need should arise, could you tell them something that would make them sympathize with you in your objection?"

She seemed about to speak several times before she began. Then: "Sympathize? No. If that moment ever came there would be no sympathy . . . for me."

She sat there, head lowered, her mouth repressed to a drooping curve. "Will the flowers bind them closer than my refusal to let the florist send them? Is there any way—any appeal I can make to Rosalind that I haven't made?"

"The truth," Alice said. The words were distinct, but they came on a whisper of hoarseness, and Mrs. Karanoff gave no sign that she heard. She rose and stood

there, her figure not so expressive of indecision as of waiting. Waiting for guidance? for some further word from Alice? for some event that would wring the truth from her? *What did she wait for?* Couldn't she feel that the bond between Rosalind and Norris was tightening because she waited? Alice moved uneasily with the impatience of dread.

"There is no use in objecting to the flowers." Mrs. Karanoff seemed to be talking to herself rather than to the governess. "They are a natural reaction on Rosalind's part; I would only make things worse, but if she writes to Norris, the letter must be stopped." She seemed to listen to an echo of her own words before she turned to look at Alice. "The flowers are enough. Alice, I must ask you to keep guard, to watch and intercept a letter. Let her pour out her emotion in words; she will be relieved. Then she will wait for a reply, and if no reply comes she will be repelled; that is what I want. And, on Norris's side, if the flowers are the only message from Rosalind he will accept them as proper but . . . conclusive." She walked about, one hand on her cheek, gazing straight before her. "I shall watch; I don't leave it entirely to you, but I beg of you to be alert; to listen and watch."

That letter—the letter that was to tell Norris that God was good—perhaps the sincerest, the worthiest letter Rosalind had ever written was to be stolen and turned from its destination.

"Rosalind is probably writing the letter now," Alice said slowly, "unless she drove down to the florist's.

She said something about not charging the flowers to you. She wanted pink roses and delphinium—delphinium because it would express loyalty to him—true blue, she called it. And she was going to tell Norris her religious belief—to help him in his sorrow. She said that because she was modern and young it would matter more to him what she believed than what the minister said."

"Oh . . ." Mrs. Karanoff's face was like a wound. Alice went on. "She said that she would write him the most wonderful letter she ever wrote in her life and not feel ashamed to say all that she felt. 'I'll tell him there *is* a heaven and a God who'll make them happy, and that they'll be waiting for Gramp.' "

Into the stillness that followed Alice's words, Mrs. Karanoff said: "And you don't want to have any part in stopping such a letter. You want me not to insist. Very well. I will do it alone. The letter must be stopped." She turned her back on Alice and left the room.

X

IT was several minutes before Alice followed Mrs. Karanoff, and by the time she overtook her she had already made a swift tour of the house in her search for Rosalind. She was stepping out on the terrace where Nico was working intently on his toy sail boat. Alice reached her side as Nico said, abstractedly, "She took the roadster and a lot of stuff and went away."

Mrs. Karanoff did not look at Alice, but her face that was pale and set with determination went a shade whiter and her eyes seemed to contract and draw back into their own blue shadows. "What do you mean by 'a lot of stuff,' Nico?"

Nico, intent on his work, drove a tiny nail into his jib mast before he answered. "Oh, stuff—a cushion and a big book. I don't know what."

She had gone to the chasm to write to Norris—Alice knew with certainty—and she would mail the letter before she returned home. She said to Mrs. Karanoff, "Do you want me to hunt for her? I'll gladly go." She heard contrition in her own voice. Her rebellion had been brief, and she was glad it was so. She wanted to be in sympathy with Rosalind's mother rather than against her. Mrs. Karanoff was so sure that she must be right, and to sympathize with Rosalind against her mother probably was the unkindest thing she could do to the child.

Mrs. Karanoff turned her strangely contracted eyes to Alice. They looked as if a long sleepless night of weeping had left them dark and shrunken, yet no tear had touched her cheek since Alice first interrupted her letter writing; her eyes had been clear and beautiful then with their look of spirit.

Fear for Rosalind did not send this fragile woman into nervous tremors; it seemed rather to break and torment her until she seemed the embodiment of desperate courage with endurance enough for an army. It was unthinkable that guilt was part of her suffering,

for spiritual vision and support were so certainly part of her strength.

"No," she said, answering Alice's offer, "we must wait here for her—at least for a while."

At one o'clock, when Rosalind still had not come, Alice went to Mrs. Karanoff, who was pacing the study. "I believe she drove out to the chasm to write that letter," Alice confessed. "Won't you let me go after her?"

"Yes. And I will go with you."

When they reached the usual place of entrance to the chasm, Mrs. Karanoff observed that the roadster was not there. "She has parked somewhere else. I will go down this path to look for her while you drive on and locate the roadster. If you find it, look for her and send the car back here to get me." Her voice was steady, her movements quick, and she was already beginning the descent. A quarter of a mile down the road Alice came upon Rosalind's roadster parked off the pavement, its radiator thrust into a clump of sumac. The road was so narrow at that point that Alice wondered at Rosalind's choice of a parking place until she saw a flight of narrow wooden steps leading down to the rocks. The roar of the waterfall was like the booming of drums; the white of foam in the pool below became smooth black water at the foot of the steps and in it were mirrored the walls of rocks with their crevice gardens of bluebells and wild asters.

She began her descent feeling, uncannily, as if she were going down into a bottomless pit, for the river

was too narrow there to mirror sky, and the water directly beneath her was so still and black that the reflections seemed to be real—rocks below rocks, dropping down and down into darkness.

She kept her eyes on the steps as she went down between the screens of pine trees through which the descent was cut, but when she came into the open she paused to look about for Rosalind and saw her at once in her bright rose dress scrambling over the rocks. She gave evidence of great haste. She was dragging a coat and the "stuff" Nico had been unable to define—a cushion, a bag and a large leather blotting book. Her haste was so great that she did not see Alice, who stood high above her, until she was almost under her feet on the steps. Then she did not pause in her ascent, but climbed on till she was hidden between the double screen of pine trees.

"Mother is over there looking for me," she panted. "I'm not going to let her find me. I won't be pursued like this. Why did you come here?"

"To find you. You must wait and see your mother before you start back."

"Alice, this is the limit! I won't do it. I'll go on in the roadster and mother can follow. We'll talk at home; not here." She turned and ran swiftly up the long steep flight.

Mrs. Karanoff's car had returned and was waiting for Alice. Rosalind ran to the roadster, and Alice pursued her.

"You can go back and get mother," Rosalind was

saying. She waved Alice off the step and started the motor.

"Rosalind! Wait." Alice was trembling with the intensity of her feeling. "You must listen to me." She reached in and turned off the ignition. "You have been writing to Norris. You mustn't mail that letter."

Rosalind's breathless haste had steadied; she laid one arm over the steering wheel and leaned back quietly against the cushions, but Alice saw that every nerve and muscle of her body was tuned for battle. "I won't talk about it here."

"Will you give me your letter for safe keeping? You know I will respect every right you have in this affair."

"No, I won't give it to you."

"Why?"

"You have no right to it."

"Why do you suppose I want it? Because I'm curious? Or to be mean?"

Rosalind raised her shoulders in a light shrug.

"If you knew it would bring you unhappiness, would you still want to mail this letter?"

"Love usually does bring both happiness and unhappiness, but we can't escape it on that account. I'll risk the unhappiness."

Alice stared into her cold, rigid little face, so soft in its outlines, so kissed with loveliness. She looked determined not to speak, as if she could sit there for hours, winner of a contest of silence against persuasion, then with a swift change of expression she relented.

"It's the kind of letter I told you I was going to write. It's impossible that harm should come of the most beautiful thing I ever did."

Alice opened the door and got into the car. She began, "If it's so beautiful your mother will see it so."

"You don't believe that!" Rosalind snapped the words and her eyes flamed with anger. "Nothing about Norris and me has ever been anything but beautiful, and she hasn't seen it or cared. 'Kill it; kill it,' she has seemed to say from the first. Until she is more beautiful in her way of managing me I shall do as I please. I'm not my father's daughter for nothing. Mother couldn't work any blind orders on him." She again turned on the motor and put the gears in reverse. "I want you to get out, Alice, and go back to mother. I'll meet you at home."

Alice kept her seat. "Take me to your mother. At least that far."

Rosalind did not answer, but she drove up the road and stopped behind her mother, who stood at the edge of the chasm, looking, looking this way and that way. The breeze whipped her short gray skirt and wound it tight about her as she turned at sound of Alice's voice. A quick change ran over Rosalind's face. To resist her mother from a distance was easier than in the presence of her compelling appeal, for every line and expression of her face and body were intensely winning. To dry her tears, to soothe her fears became an imperative need to one who loved her. Rosalind stirred uneasily. "Dearest," her mother began when she was close beside the

roadster, "won't you drive the big car home so we can be together, and let Frederic take the roadster?"

"Mother! No. I'll talk to you at home. Not now. I'm so hungry and tired, we'll say things we regret." She was staring straight ahead.

Mrs. Karanoff did not answer at once. The noon silence of the place was unbroken save by the soft murmur of Rosalind's motor. The sun throbbed on the pavement and flung up a wave of heat. One moment Alice smelled the oily dust of the road, the next she caught a whiff of water as the breeze blew the spray from the falls.

"All right, dear. Alice will ride home with you."

"I want to be alone. *Mother!* Have I no rights? not even of feeling? I came here to be alone. Why must I have a guardian?"

Mrs. Karanoff fell back from the side of the car. "Dearest. . . ." Her eloquent, pleading eyes were on Rosalind. "I can't force you to be wise. . . ." She stood there in the heat, her troubled face beautiful with the love she offered. She had given up; her surrender freed Alice.

Alice opened the door of the roadster. She had put one foot on the step when Rosalind suddenly cried, "Stay in then, but please don't talk."

She ran through the gears and they were off in high speed. Immediately the speedometer was registering fifty miles an hour, fifty-five, sixty-five—a pace she knew her mother could not endure, even to keep near the roadster. Fortunately it was the hour of low ebb in

the day's activity. An after-luncheon laziness was on the countryside, and Rosalind tore past farms and through small settlements unchallenged. She was obliged to stop at a crossroad, and after that she kept her pace down a little until she reached the city.

At the first pillar box in the downtown section, she stopped, and pushing aside the coat on the seat between her and Alice, uncovered the blotting book from which she took the letter. Alice tried to stop her, but Rosalind humped a shoulder at her and slid out of the car.

Unless she entered into a tussle with her, Alice knew she could not prevent the disobedience. She watched with aching eyes and throat while Rosalind slipped the letter into the post box.

XI

LUNCHEON was a quiet meal. Of the trio Mrs. Karanoff ate least and made the greatest effort for a return to normal. Rosalind left the table first. "I want to bathe and dress before I talk to you, mother. Is that all right?" Her tone was wistful, deferential.

"Yes. Will you come to my room when you're ready?"

Rosalind said that she would, and walked with the lagging step of despondency from the room. "She's wretched when she disobeys you. She's feeling as sick about it as you are," Alice murmured.

"Yes." Mrs. Karanoff's gaze was on an untouched

pear that lay gold and pink on a green crystal plate before her. In the same low tone Alice continued, "Has it occurred to you that you can telegraph Dr. Field that that letter is on the way and have it intercepted? . . . that is, of course, if he cares, too."

Mrs. Karanoff picked up her fruit knife and pressed the point against her finger tip. After a while she said, "I did telegraph him." She lifted her unhappy eyes to meet Alice's astonished gaze. "I was close behind you two. I saw Rosalind mail the letter."

Alice could make no reply. She had suggested the telegram without realizing how desperate a measure it was; the knowledge that it had already gone to Dr. Field was shocking. It must indeed be important to keep the two young people apart.

"Why did you tell me that?" she asked after a thoughtful moment. She almost resented the confidence.

"To make you realize the importance of . . . the thing."

The strange contradictions of this woman! At times, her quiet courage; again her seeming cowardice. Perhaps it was simply that her courage was so much greater than her capacity for physical endurance. Mrs. Karanoff was saying: "After this talk with Rosalind I shall say no more. I have nothing now with which to restrain her except my love. To make her feel it again, to stamp her with the imprint of it, to wrap her in it—that is all I can do. I'm not going to ask her to make promises. I am just going to love her." She turned then and left the room and Alice sat staring at the core of her pear.

Parents had nothing left any more with which to guide their children except the power of their love. Mrs. Karanoff was right in depending upon it. Youth was like quicksilver. Nobody, handling it, could know which way it would move next; how it would scatter; where it would break. There had been a time when parents had had authority; they whipped; they domineered by right of might and pocketbook. Now a child had avenues of escape that once did not exist. Girls could defy their parents and go out to work—a comparatively new privilege. The fear of a brimstone hell once had had the power of certain kinds of restraint, but Darwin had taken it away. Only love; that was all there was left, the love of God transmuted into the love of parents. Well, it was enough, for it included prayer. It was the only right medium through which to work with youth; the only power that had enduring value. A child who would not respond to the authority of love needed the hard lessons it would learn through disobedience. And the child's need was to be considered before the parents'. Through all her years with Mrs. Karanoff, Alice had seen the power of her love in her relationship to her husband, to her children and the servants in her house. Her love gave her right vision for them all and for herself; it gave her the power to make her vision felt. Surely it would win her this one more struggle.

Alice spent what remained of the afternoon down by the lake with Nico. He was racing the sloop he had built against one his father had bought him, and his

determination to prove that the one of his own manufacture was the better craft was becoming a tiresome battle. There was nothing Alice could do to help him; he was in the water himself, hardly making a ripple, so carefully he moved lest he disturb the course the ships were sailing.

He was to make his first public appearance at the White Falls Hospital bazaar on December fifteenth. He and Alice would return a little early for the event, and it was indeed an event since it was the one time of exception to the Karanoffs' rule for him, and also because Rosalind would be left to travel home alone.

Alice sat on the dock in the sun and took a quiet farewell of summer and home. To-morrow she would be packing for Nico and herself, helping the maid with Rosalind's trunk, doing last things before they left for school. This was her hour for quiet. She looked at the *Russia* lying at anchor. There was a stir of preparation on board for Rosalind was taking a party out for the evening. There had been such a party the last week-end when the moon was high—a perfect moon at a perfect moment. The *Russia's* deck lights had been turned off and they had sung and danced in a silver mist above a silver sea. Corny had courted Rosalind with his steady pursuing glance, his close-shut lips eloquent and provoking both at once, and Rosalind had pretended that she thought his silence meant indifference.

When she was well away from home she was going to remember her mother's patience with regret. She

would link her mother's loveliness with Corny's unspoken tributes, and admit that her mother was right in choosing Corny as a friend for her.

They were still shut in Mrs. Karanoff's room saying the same things over and over. . . . Love, the theme of it all. It could bear repeating.

Alice saw Mr. Karanoff come home. He got out of his car with difficulty and limped slowly along the terrace. Even from so great a distance Alice could see the grim endurance in his countenance. Save for occasional flashes of his passionate arrogance, his defiance, he was a chastened man, still suffering in the defeat of that something indefinable in his spirit, yet solaced by his small family whose love for him had blossomed and bloomed as his disability and his defeat mellowed his tempestuous qualities.

The September sunset touched a bank of wild growth on the shore of the woods—crimson sumac and yellow ailanthus like twins in dresses of different colors, and five-fingered ivy, blood red, that spiraled the black tree trunks. The maple trees were turning already in northen Wisconsin. Would they be red in Massachusetts where she would be before the week was done? She must look up that autumn poem with its memorable lines:

"The scarlet of the maples can shake me like a cry
"Of bugles going by,
"And my lively spirit thrills
"To see the frosty asters like a smoke upon the hills."

The sky began to turn to purple and yellow and pink —banks of broken clouds that were like the soft tints of flowers. Alice thought of paintings she had seen of the flower markets of the Mediterranean. Violets and mimosa, carnations and cineraria in masses almost unbelievable in their quantity.

Over the far hills to the east twilight began to lower her curtain, and the lake trembled into moiré patterns of disturbed loveliness. The beautiful park and The Towers that had been her home for a round dozen years had become so much part of her that she felt as if they were native to her blood. The old Speare house in Gloucester seemed a dream by comparison to the reality that included this scene, this family, this situation. She had supposed her work here would have been done long years ago when Nico was ready for his tutor. Fortunately for her his genius and Mrs. Karanoff's strange burdened soul had kept her there, needed, loved, trusted—her dream come true. Perhaps this would be her home always. She might always be needed and wanted.

The thought brought her back to the acute situation of the day. Even though she must act blindly there was no course for her but to help Mrs. Karanoff save Rosalind from a sorrow that she—Alice—dared not admit she understood.

XII

IT was a relief to have both children back at school on full schedule work. To know that Rosalind was rising at a respectable hour and asleep before the night life was in full cry, gave her guardians a sense of peace that was soon interrupted by her reminders that the Thanksgiving week-end was approaching. She accepted the fact that her parents were at White Sulphur Springs as excellent reason why they should not "bother" to join their children in New York for the short holiday. She was very generous in her assurance that they—the children and Alice—would not expect "darling dad" to risk the change, nor mother to leave him all alone on a holiday.

Your thoughtfulness for us is touching, her father wrote, *and you are quite right in advising us not to leave here. Let us hope that Alice will make up to you for the desolation you will suffer without us.*

Rosalind asked Alice by letter: *Now, why should dad get sarcastic like that? It takes all the sweetness out of his checks, like saying 'have a good time and be damned.' Isn't he FUNNY?* and having disposed thus of her father's wish that once at school she would stay there and not agitate him with her craving for play on the edge of the underworld, she got down to the business of planning the week-end. *Let's go to the Biltmore. It's the most fun. Everybody is going to be there and we'll have a perfectly precious time. Do get all set to*

make Nico behave with my friends. I saw signs in him last summer of being VIRILE. *Squash him, Alie, if he tries it on me, will you? He's going to look like a drug store sheik with his black eyes and scornful mien if we don't bring him up right. How would it be to order a little piano put in our sitting room so as to keep him occupied? They have the cutest pianos in New York—all different colors and you can rent them. You can wheel them around anywhere like a tea cart. We could wheel it in Nico's room when I wanted the sitting room. . . .*

Alice passed the suggestion on to Nico, and he received it with enthusiasm. "I must pick it out myself," he said, giving her a warning flash of his eyes. "As soon as we get in I'll go and select the one I want. They'll have to send it over by special delivery. Write them that ahead."

On the train he said to Alice, after a thoughtful silence, "Roz must be liking me better than usual to think about that piano for me." His tone was wistful, a note as rare in him as it once must have been in his father.

"Don't tease Rosalind, Nico, and you'll soon see how she adores you, how proud she is of you."

"I know, just the same. . . ."

"What?"

"Because she looks the way she does, she feels as if she isn't as much Jew as I am. She doesn't like the Jew in me. Only one quarter of us is Jew, but I got it all. She thinks she didn't get any!"

"Nico, it's the Jew in you that is the genius! When I think of the history of the Jews in Russia it is like a tremendous river of blood with singing in its agony and beauty in its throes. Your ancestors are very phœnixes. The passion, the victory, the memories of those who have come through fire and *survived* is in their souls. To have *that* singing out through your fingers as you have it, is to be blessed . . . inexpressibly. That's what makes it possible for you to reach for the stars and grasp them. Without it you would be an ordinary boy."

"Gee, Alie! Why didn't you tell me all that before? I like it!"

"Oh, I did, dear. I'm always thinking it. I wish every Jew knew how I understand and appreciate. The very faults of the race are elongations of the virtues that made them survive."

Nico passed over that. He harked back: "Do you call Rosalind ordinary?"

"Yes—compared to you."

He did not try to conceal his satisfaction. Alice wished she had not complimented him. "Roz doesn't want to do anything big. She just wants to play and look beautiful and be admired."

"Give her time. She'll be a wonderful woman. Lovely!"

"I pity her kids."

"Brothers always say that." Alice laughed at him. "Save your pity, and vow a vow that you won't marry a girl who is less fine than Rosalind."

Through expressive lips, Nico spewed the very nauseous idea of a wife.

They found Rosalind and the chaperone who had brought her in from Miss Belden's awaiting them in their sitting room. The chaperone left immediately after Alice had arrived, and Rosalind, released from the last tie that bound her to school, jumped for the telephone. In less than half an hour a crowd had gathered about her for tea. They talked mostly in chorus; they laughed through almost everything they said even though argument was the tenor of nearly every serious subject.

"Let's go to East Sixtieth Street for tea. That place; you know. . . ."

"No! That's *done*. That was last year's hang-out. What's the matter with you? The Ambassador's the last word."

"Oh, do you remember that night at George Olson's? Honest, Ginny, if I never live to see another night like that I'll die happy."

"What night?"

"What night? Bunny, *you* tell us." Squeals and giggling.

"If you girls don't get a hustle on it'll be dinner time. . . ."

"An' we ainagonna buy no dinner for you-oo-oo-oo."

"You'd be surprised! Maybe you are too. Wait till you see. . . ."

"Oh, come on. I've got a taxi down at the door purring like a tiger."

"What did you keep your taxi for, Nut? Don't you know this isn't like the home town where they only have one hack? All right then we go to The Ambassador. All set?"

There was a swelling chorus of "Get going!" and a thinning of sound. Then the door slammed and the voices were in the corridor.

Alice and Nico exchanged a long stare of astonishment. "Kids," Nico said scornfully. "I don't want tea. I want *food!* It's almost dinner time now. Let's go and get the piano."

Alice agreed to forego tea, though she had doubts about the dinner hour. If Nico was to have the piano that night they must not delay in choosing it.

They left at once and walked briskly out to Fifth Avenue where they found that "singing crystal street" as tonic as ever; it glistened, it poured, it hummed, it flashed. It lightened their bodies so that they walked with spring and a sense of fleet well-being. They could have fox-trotted gaily along the promenade.

Too soon they found the piano house and the little pianos, as Rosalind had said, in all the loveliest colors like a roomful of flowers. Nico tried several before he sat down before one done in Chinese red and began Chabrier's bell-like rhapsody, *España.* He played it through with glorious rhythm, and said when he had finished it, without the least echo of the rhapsody in his voice, "I'll take this one. It's to be sent to-night. My secretary arranged about that. Nicolai Karanoff at the Biltmore."

Alice discovered herself as the secretary of this regal youth! The incident was as revivifying as tea would have been, and the humor of it carried her through Nico's hunger-temper, his grumbling and impatience until seven o'clock when Rosalind blew in on a breeze of high good fellowship. She was suffused with radiance. "I've been dancing ever since I left here, and oh, the joy of it after that school! I have no date till ten o'clock, then we're all to meet here. We'll end up at The Mirador." She couldn't get quite enough to sit down, but stood in the center of the room, her fur coat slipping from her shoulders, her smiling face lifted as if she were still hearing the dance music. "I had such a perfect time. Everybody you'd ever hope to know was there, even some of the New York crowd." Her voice was soft with remembered ecstasy.

"*Even* some?"

"Yes, the college mob that's here are mostly western people who can't go home for such a short time—like us. Let's not have dinner till half past eight." She bent backward in a dreaming pose, and lifting her arms, let her hands float downward. "Slow meal, languorous music; tons of time. . . . Oh, to think I don't have to hear a lights-out bell at a quarter to ten! Isn't . . . it . . . wonderful?"

In her holiday mood there would be no time for repining over an absent lover. Norris Field would be as remote in her thought as Cornelius, working in his father's office far, far away in still, little sober White Falls.

Since the day she had mailed the letter to Norris which her mother had thought dangerous enough to have stopped even by the strategy of a telegram to Dr. Field, Rosalind had written but once about it to Alice —*Norris has never answered my letter. He thanked me for the flowers before the letter had time to get there, and since then there hasn't been a word. Naturally I am not writing to him. If it relieves you any to know, that's the state of affairs.*

It was a relief to have her as she was to-night—in love only with life. If she could remain so until years of discretion gave her stability it would be fortunate for her guardians, but there was little chance of that. Before this week-end was over she would probably be centered, heart and soul, in some raccoon-coated, shining-haired youth from Yale or Brown or Princeton. The city was full of them, all looking alike to Alice, all eyeing Rosalind with interest, and, so far as she could judge by their voices and manners, all equally desirable. Why couldn't Rosalind weigh the qualities of each, the habits and antecedents, and decide upon a safe friend such as Cornelius? Why must she fall in love with a particular one, right or wrong, and center her affection on him?

In spite of Nico's emphatic protest, they did not go down to dinner until eight, for Rosalind was so deliberate about her dressing that it was her chosen hour of a half after eight when their blue points were set before them.

The dining room was well punctuated with small

family groups—typical American parents with a school child or two, all looking as if they were fresh from the *modiste's,* from golf and baths.

"See? Everybody dines late," Rosalind said.

"Everybody's finishing late, yes," Nico growled. "We're just beginning. To-morrow I'm going to have my meals when I want them. No tea and a half past six dinner."

"To-morrow is Thanksgiving," Rosalind reminded him, "and we're going to have dinner after the game. We wouldn't have time for tea anyway to-morrow because we're going to the theater in the evening. Alice agreed to that. She said I could plan it and that you'd plan the same way."

"Well, I remember."

Young men, passing out of the dining room, let their eyes linger with inquiry on Rosalind, who appeared unaware of their proximity. Her eyes held their half-closed dreaming look and she ate with beautiful deliberation as if she were alone with the orchestra and her own enthralling thoughts.

"Don't you ever *see* the fellows who stare at you, Roz?" Nico asked her after several had passed.

Rosalind slowly lifted a *petitfour* to her lips so that Nico could not see her drop one eyelid to Alice. "Did somebody stare?" she asked him, and looked around inquiringly.

Her languor was gone when at ten o'clock the crowd began to gather in their sitting room—girls ablaze with crystals and sequins, scarlet lipped and flower fragrant;

men with their enormous raccoon coats and pleated shirt fronts. Some of them perched on chairs and tables; some of them chose the floor, and all smoked diligently the ubiquitous cigarette.

"They gave away perfectly adorable dolls at Le Perroquet last night," somebody said, and the girls went into raptures. They went into raptures over anything; they laughed at nothing; they made the same jokes over and over, particularly old jokes from the Two Black Crows. "'O it is SO soft,'" somebody drawled when a boy called Bertie sat down on the floor with a thump, and they all screamed with laughter. "'Maybe I shouldn't have mentioned it,'" one and another quoted in bored tones at intervals, and when Bunny whistled a tune on two fingers, Rosalind started a riot of mirth by saying, with slow insouciance, "'Even if that was *good* I wouldn't like it.'"

They trouped out at eleven o'clock and Alice and Nico, exchanging a long expressive look that needed no words, agreed that after that, bed was their supreme need.

"They're going to do that till maybe four o'clock!" Nico said incredulously. "I'll never be that kind of a brainless bird."

Alice dared not sleep until Rosalind was in, and she perceived suddenly, as she prepared to read in bed, that between Rosalind's late hours and Nico's eagerness to be up and out in the morning she would have little rest until after she returned to Boston.

XIII

ALICE read and dozed; roused and read and slept again uneasily until three o'clock when she was waked by the stir of garments and Rosalind's cool touch.

She started up, exclaiming brokenly, but Rosalind did not move from her position beside the bed. She was kneeling, her cold fingers crept into Alice's hand, her cheek pressed upon it. Alice put the other hand on her hair. "What is it, dear?"

Rosalind turned her face to the light. "Norris was there."

"At The Mirador?"

"Yes. Alone."

Alice stroked her hair soothingly; she could hardly keep awake even for news of such alarming importance. "Tell me," she whispered.

"The place was jammed. The orchestra . . . the laughing. . . . And then . . . I *felt* that Norris was near me. I looked and looked . . . but I didn't see him. I knew that if I called 'Norris?' he'd answer, 'Here, Rosalind,' and yet I couldn't see him. And then I did." There was a little moan as if she didn't want to put what she was feeling into words, even though the urge to talk about it would not let her stop: "He was standing back in the waiting line, *looking at me.* I went back where he was. The crowd . . . his eyes . . . He said, 'You'll dance with me when I get in?' as if I *wouldn't;*

as if maybe I didn't want to! I had to leave him waiting there and go back. . . ."

"And then?" Alice prompted after a stillness so complete that it was as if Rosalind slept.

"I waited and waited." A hot tear dropped on Alice's hand. Words were an effort, but she made the effort. She said,

"Then we danced together, and it's just no use. . . ."

"What is no use?"

"Trying not to care. We both care. Just being near each other changes the whole world."

"Where is Norris staying?"

"I don't know. I didn't ask . . . things like that." After a while Rosalind rose from her knees. She dropped her glittering dress, her scraps of undergarments on a chair with movements that were weighted with weariness and despondency. When she was in her nightgown she sat before the dressing table, but with head lowered so that she should not see her own reflection, and pulled out hairpins, and made short work of smoothing her hair. When she stood beside her bed she seemed to wait for Alice to turn out the lamp. Alice put her hand on the chain, "Don't you want me to wait till you're in?"

"No. . . . Put it out."

Alice did not hear any sound as if Rosalind were tucking herself in until, after a long stillness, there was a soft stir and all the rustling of settling down for sleep. "Good night," she murmured, and Alice felt her hand groping. She held it and pressed it in a long close clasp.

"God bless you, darling. Good night." The hand was withdrawn.

Rosalind had been praying! She had been kneeling there beside her bed. Poor little stormy heart—what had she asked of God? Norris, or strength to resist him? Well as she knew her, Alice could not decide which was most likely. But because she had prayed, because she had seemed numb with hurt it was possible that she had asked for strength to resist her heart's desire.

Morning did not bring a change of mood to Rosalind. "I don't want to see any of those silly loons," she said when she waked. And later: "If you want to go to a church, Alie, I'll go with you. It's Thanksgiving."

She stood still and dispirited in the middle of the sitting room, her absent eyes on Nico, who was making the little piano tremble.

"I would love that, Rosalind. Let's go out and walk up the avenue and go in wherever we feel we want to."

Rosalind turned to take up her coat. She looked almost ill, more like her mother than ever before, with pain in her eyes, and face blanched by physical and mental weariness. They left Nico and went out, but not to a singing crystal street. Fifth Avenue was like Rosalind—a beautiful living thing shuttered and still.

They walked slowly, arm in arm. By her hesitating pauses before an occasional window display, Alice signified to Rosalind her willingness to stop and gaze, but Rosalind did not seem to see the baubles she usually loved.

"Did he bring you to the hotel last night?" Alice asked, purposely substituting the pronoun for Norris's name.

"Yes." And after a pause, "They'll never forgive me—that crowd. I just left them and went away."

"With Norris?"

"Yes."

They walked for almost a block before Rosalind asked: "Do you have to tell mother?"

How answer the question?

"Dear—if I told you that I feel I must tell her you wouldn't give me your confidence; if I said I wouldn't tell her, wouldn't it make you do things that otherwise . . ."

"No. I'm going to do my best—the best I can—*because* of mother. Would it help any, or make me . . . care less to have mother alarmed?"

"I don't think it would."

"I don't like to worry her."

And still they walked until they came to the open door of St. Nicholas'.

"I'd like to go in here," Rosalind said. On the steps Alice was impelled to give her arm a close pressure and to say, "If it's any comfort, I want to tell you something I see. This experience is making you more beautiful."

"I didn't want to be that kind of beautiful."

Of course she didn't! "That kind of beauty" was the beauty of wounds, the beauty of autumn; yet it was true that sorrow made any woman beautiful in the

heart just as happiness made her beautiful if it was not meted to her too abundantly.

In the dim welcoming church, Alice watched the still profile beside her and prayed for wisdom; prayed that she might see her duty. She concentrated her thankfulness on the few things that, above all others, she was conscious of being grateful for that day—that she was with Rosalind in her temptation; that, like her mother and her father, the child had her Spartan side and that it was in evidence this morning. "Courage enough for an army," Alice had thought of her mother. Rosalind had that same fine courage; the only doubt now was of her wisdom in the use of it. She had courage enough to carry her through an elopement with Norris, or enough to renounce him; it all depended on the way she saw her situation. And how to guide her; what not to say, for she must say so little! Rosalind was much too young for the great love of her life. Though her inexperience made this passion seem as fervid as the noonday sun, it was really but the warm glow of love's dawn that she was feeling. It would be impossible to make her believe that; there was no use in wasting the few sentences she would allow herself in advising Rosalind on that thought, for she knew beforehand that Rosalind couldn't believe it.

Norris was beloved of her for exactly the opposite quality that her father was beloved of her mother. Mrs. Karanoff worshiped her husband's masterful qualities while Rosalind was loving Norris for his capacity to endure denial. She was championing his cause,

even more perhaps, than she was loving him. "He's so sweet. It just breaks my heart to see how he stands things!" she had said once. Wasn't his father like that? Alice dared to open the secret door in her mind for a moment and to remember vividly the voices she had heard by the guest house—Dr. Field's brimming, as eyes brim with tears that do not overflow, when he said: "You aren't driving me away . . . exactly. I knew before you told me that I would have to go." For years those words had smoldered in Alice's consciousness like fire that is not given the oxygen to wake it into flame. It was a forbidden memory and must be thrust back into its hiding place. . . .

She turned her face toward Rosalind, and the young girl, feeling her gaze, opened her eyes. On common impulse they made the effort and exchanged faint smiles. "Let's go," Rosalind whispered. She rose, gathering her velvet coat about her fashionable little figure, and stepped into the aisle.

"Alice . . ." she began, when they were out again walking in the rain. "I told you once what Norris and I believe; we are almost certain of it now. My father and Norris's mother had some sort of an affair that nearly kills mother and Dr. Field. If you've watched them you know that dad seems to stand by, all locked and sealed and grim with endurance. He has to bear seeing mother suffer over something he did. Norris says his father is like that too—locked and sealed and enduring some memory that he can't tell any more than he can walk on the street without his

clothes. What could dad have done . . . and Norris's mother to make them all so terrible in their silence? You must know that I think and think and think about it; and that Norris does too, so don't be shocked at what I'm going to say. We are grown up really, even if we are young. Norris knows a lot about medicine now; he's twenty-one; he has a purpose and an income all his own and a right to think things." She was pleading to be considered seriously!

"Rosalind dear, I know! You needn't prepare me this way. What is it you have decided?"

"We haven't *decided;* we just think that *maybe.* . . ." She had to stop to gather nerve with which to voice the words and Alice saw her gloved hand clench. She whispered: "That *maybe* my father . . . is Norris's father too."

Alice hardly breathed. She couldn't look at Rosalind, for her one flashing response was relief. If they believed that for a while, even at so terrible a cost to their ideals, it would save them from going further in their passion. Disgust would displace affection. So far they didn't believe it, they were only guessing and not conceiving the enormity of the thing they guessed, or they would separate and abhor the thought of meeting as lovers. No, they didn't believe it, but they had thought it, and now Rosalind was trying to get some expression on the guess from her—Alice. Shocking though it was, it was a means of restraining their passion, at least, temporarily.

She heard Rosalind's husky voice continuing: "You

know what dad's reputation . . . was. Of course Norris's grandparents always said he looked like his mother. That dimple, and his hair. I don't look like dad, so why should Norris if . . . it really is true?"

Alice dared not answer. She was in no sense prepared for such a question from Rosalind. She let the gentle rain serve her: "I don't want you to get wet. Shall we have a taxi?"

"No taxi." Then: "I think you know, and that's why you won't answer." The quiet, almost emotionless mood that had been upon Rosalind since early morning still held her.

"No, I don't know! I can't allow myself to suspect that even. I like your father—though liking him has nothing to do with the matter. Of course you didn't hint this thing in your talk with your mother? Even if you had it would have done no good; your mother would never betray him."

Alice had been making talk a cover for her thoughts.

"And he would never betray Norris's mother."

"Oh. . . ." This child could think of that and say it quietly, and yet, a moment before, she had been pleading to be considered mature in mind!

At last Rosalind was finding relief in tears. The umbrella sheltered her; her face was half masked with fur. She was suffering dreadfully. That her joy—the very *élan vital* of her which yesterday had made her the personification of radiance, should be quenched, meant that her meeting with Norris had been cataclysmic in its intensity, and then heart-breaking in its unfolding.

Like bright-hued gauze that rain has washed and wind has whipped, she was empty of color and joy.

XIV

NOT until December eighteenth did Alice know that Rosalind had not gone to the game that afternoon. Then a letter, written Thanksgiving night, confessed everything, even detailing the scheme that she and Norris had decided upon.

Darling understanding Alice, it began, and by the writing and the smudges Alice knew there had been no deliberate weighing of words; she had gone at the writing of it on impulse, and the whole phrase structure showed that the mood of abandonment to love and regret had continued throughout the writing. Save for an occasional period or question mark she punctuated with long dashes that were to Alice like the breaking of her voice on tears, like the turning away of her face from a thought she could not endure. She had dipped her pen in a well of emotion that was fed by two streams—one that flowed cool and strong from her head; the other warm and fervid from her heart.

It's terrible to be with you accepting your love and your wonderful faith in me while I am thinking—thinking all the time of the thing I mean to do. Next to my own mother nobody in the world could be the way you are to me. So kind—so understanding—loving me and yet always thinking about that tremendous DUTY

of yours that you're so keen about! Alice, I'd rather tell you if I could. You're in our room asleep and I am out in our sitting room writing to keep me from waking you and confessing everything because I can hardly bear it. Now that Norris has thought that about his mother whom any boy and especially a boy like Norris would think of as an angel, he's got to find out. He says he's got to clear his mother or else KNOW *the truth. He'll never blame her. He'd kill anybody who blamed her. She was so young when she died. But he's got to know. Anyway, even if it didn't have anything to do with his mother or with my father—we have got to know. I don't have to explain that to you. You think I went to the game to-day but I didn't. I didn't tell you any fibs because of the way things happened. The crowd did call for me but I had promised Norris I'd meet him in the park—we were there all afternoon, sometimes in taxis, sometimes walking. We made our plans and we said good-by in the taxi. I was sick—and yet happy because he loves me so much. Anyway, I saw him drive away and I went in the hotel and my knees were trembling. You were standing there with Nico and you didn't see me. I wanted to go to you and hold on to you tight and cry and cry till I was all empty of tears the way I am now. Of course I couldn't because I had to keep the secret, so I sat down and then the crowd came in and after that you saw me and it was easy to let you go on believing that I had been with the crowd all the time. At dinner I could see you saying to yourself—"Her suffering about Nor-*

ris has passed. She's so young"—and I was thankful you thought that. Isn't it good people can't read each other's minds? I was afraid you'd read mine somehow and I didn't want you to. It was just a throbbing, throbbing mass of Norris. He looks so quiet and he's so gentle and he'd never ask me to do a thing I'd be sorry for, and yet he makes me know how much he loves me. Oh Alice do you know what it is to be seventeen-and-a-half and twenty-one and just out of school and in New York where the very air sparkles with something tingling? As if it was little stinging specks of electric frost? And loving somebody so that you could drop down on your knees and kiss his shoes and kiss his hands and cry with your face on his knees. . . .

I did that to-day and I'd do it again now if he were here and not care—so you won't be surprised at what we're going to do. I'm not going to see him again while we're in New York—not till December seventeenth, when school lets out. Then he'll be waiting for me in New York with a suite like this one so there'll be room for the row when it breaks on us—and in the afternoon I'M GOING TO TELEPHONE MOTHER THAT WE'RE MARRIED. *We won't be. Norris won't even get the license then but I would and then after I telephone mother we're going* TO KEEP STILL *and see what happens. Then if it's true—what just haunts us—because we can't think what else would make everybody so silent and terrified about us they'll have to tell us—you see? We can imagine how dad will come on to have the marriage annulled or else he won't, because they probably haven't*

got such a good reason. The point is that we'll find out WHAT *it is. If it's just that feud and not a really good reason then—well, we haven't decided what we'll do then. I want Norris to promise that he'll keep the secret so we can go and get married to make what we said true—but he's so honest, Alice. He says he'd rather go to my father's house and marry me there in the regular way. He's so dear and old-fashioned like that, when who cares about such details?*

Alice, if God was right here looking at me I wouldn't be ashamed of this plan. I'd never elope and dishonor mother that way because of all the reasons we've agreed on, but mother and all of them make this necessary. We've got to show our fathers that just because we're young is no reason why we shouldn't be told the truth. Dr. Field did a thing that Norris can never forgive; he took that letter I wrote to Norris when Gramp died OUT OF THE MAIL *and* NORRIS NEVER GOT IT. *That's why Norris came to New York now to see me. I wrote him about a week ago that I would be here and asked him if he ever got that letter and he wrote immediately to his father accusing him of taking it out of the mail and his father just answered that they'd talk it over when they meet! He forgets that Norris is twenty-one and has an independent income. Norris never would have agreed to pretending we're married December seventeenth but for that. He's willing now to do anything he has to. The U. S. mail is sacred and his father has got to show him a terribly good reason for tampering with it, Norris says.*

I'm looking at this paper and wondering where I'll be when you read it. You shan't have it till after everything is out—all the truth. I know I've got nerve enough to go through with it, but just the same I'll want you to have this letter as soon afterwards as possible so you'll know that I feel sorry to be planning it while you're responsible for me. You're in our bedroom sound asleep. Your subconscious mind thinks I am next to you; you think I liked that play to-night. All I saw was Norris, Norris, Norris and mother defending dad from us. You'll tell her all this, you'll help her if she's sorry. Plead my case so she'll forgive me, Alice dear! When she knows Norris better she will be glad it all happened just this way for she CAN'T HELP *loving him. I believe that.*

With all my love always,

Rosalind.

Sitting beside Rosalind's bed where she lay beaten, sick, exhausted by the truth she had demanded, Alice read it that terrible December eighteenth. She remembered Thanksgiving night—her own long sleep and her peace of mind, for she had believed that Rosalind and Norris had parted the night before willing to await the natural course of events. She had thought they were being as "sensible" as they supposed themselves to be.

Quicksilver! She had known they were that—incalculable, mercurial stuff, yet she had believed them safe that night, at least for a while.

Rosalind had kept her secret well, for her agreement

with Norris was that she would go about with the crowd again, and if there was any ability for acting in her blood she was to prove it during the remainder of that holiday. Well, she had proven it. Alice had thought she was enjoying herself, though there were times when the corners of her mouth contracted with repression and her face took on a curious unsubstantial whiteness.

On Sunday morning she had again suggested church, and Alice had wondered at her piety, asking: "Do you go just because you think it pleases me, dear?" To which she had said, "No. I like it! I suppose I have the habit because of Miss Belden's."

She had been attentive during the first part of the service, and had sung with her seraphic face lifted, then during the sermon she had seemed to dream. She hardly remembered to look at the minister, but sat drooping, her eyes closed or lifted in absorbed abstraction.

"I like that man," she said when they came out. "His voice is sincere."

"Did you like his sermon?"

She smiled. "Well . . . I didn't listen much. It was a nice idea."

"I dare you to tell me what the idea was. I don't believe you listened even that much."

Rosalind had accepted the dare in smiling good temper. "It was about thankfulness for the privileges of our wonderful country. He said that anybody who had traveled abroad knew that when he put into New York harbor coming home it was the most perfect

moment of the whole experience. He said it was the Puritan who is the butt of every modern flippant joker, who had sowed the seeds of privilege that we reap today. . . . Isn't that what he said?"

"It is, exactly. That part was somewhere along the middle. I wish your father had heard it."

"It wouldn't have done him any special good. Sermons don't make people any different. They just believe the parts they believed anyway."

That response had given Alice a quite disproportionate pleasure.

In the afternoon they went to tea at the apartment of a friend of Mabel Spencer's and Mrs. Parnell's. Miss Spencer had lamented her absence on the road, but she had written a few friends that Rosalind and Nico were to be in New York, and a musical tea had been arranged for them. Nico was to play, and he had selected among others, Chabrier's *España* and Chopin's *Etude in A Flat.*

Much as Alice had longed to know the sort of people gathered to meet her two young charges that day, she had to be content to watch and listen. She could take only a small part in the talk—a kind of talk as strange and delightful as its setting, a lofty studio room that was made of pellucid greens and peacock blue. Blue of carpet and green of walls with blue velvet hangings over green gauze curtains made the light like a deep wet wood in spring. Even though its feature was a grand piano, so blanketed with jewel-encrusted velvet that

its celestial harp was become, rather, a rajah's elephant, it still was sylvan in suggestion.

In that strangely beautiful room there was no word spoken that was not familiar to her, yet the combinations of words had achieved slants of arresting thought, of subtlety, and had touched on subjects rarely considered in her prosaic life. It was fitting she thought, a symbol, that such a room should be lit by myriad candles instead of ornate lamps.

She was so impressed by the exquisite atmosphere of the place that she watched Rosalind to see if she felt it, if perhaps she was not waking with thrilling responsiveness to the world of rare delight that might be had through high devotion to thinking and the arts. But Rosalind had shown no such emotion as Alice felt. She had been the ideal "finished" American girl to all appearances that day, perfectly at ease, neither naive nor sophisticated, and conspicuously punctilious in the courtesies. She was, in fact, so prompt, so obedient to the boarding school standard that Alice decided she was over-trained. When a woman perhaps little older than herself rose, she rose; she offered her chair and retrieved handkerchiefs until Alice wanted to cry: "Don't keep reminding these friends that they are older than you!" and prepared a little talk on the faults that are the shadows of our virtues. To be so polite as to make able-bodied women conscious of their age was decidedly a fault. Later she had told Rosalind so.

Recalling that day she remembered how, during Nico's *España* and *Country Gardens* Rosalind had

shown the emotion of genuine pride and pleasure. Nico's straight back and fine head, the intelligent foot on the pedal, the oriental triangle of his features that were refined by concentration and illumined by inspiration gave his personality the stamp of power. When he stood by the piano, gravely bowing his acknowledgment of the applause, Rosalind had clapped joyously. "It was wonderful, Nico!" she cried above the din when he sat down beside her, and all the smiling roomful of charmed listeners had shown pleasure in her ingenuous enthusiasm.

He had returned at once to the piano where immediately he changed his audience's pulse beats by the liquid loveliness of Chopin. Before he was halfway through his fine rapture, Rosalind's closed hand was pressed hard against her lips, and a little later she went to a far window that looked out over the city. She was trying not to be conspicuous; she pressed her slim body into the folds of the long, heavy velvet curtain, and was shielded there by shadow. She had not applauded Nico that time, and he, looking for her, had seen her leave the room.

She had been suffering then, pangs of remorse for the thing she meant to do, yet the remorse, far in advance of the deed, did not warn her of the more profound regret that must certainly follow!

XV

HOW circumstances had played into Rosalind's hand! First of all Alice and Nico had been in White Falls for the event of the fifteenth so that, for once, she was to travel alone. And every other difficulty that might normally have prevented her meeting with Norris on December seventeenth had been cared for by an amenable fate. School was out at eleven o'clock that day; a school chaperone had taken a group of seniors in to New York and they had lunched at Sherry's. After lunch, Rosalind had gone to a beauty parlor with one of the most reliable of the group of seniors, who was to join her mother later. The three would separate for shopping, then meet to take a late afternoon train for the west, an arrangement to which Miss Belden had agreed. Rosalind, therefore, had only to say quite casually at the luncheon table that she must telephone her mother that afternoon as if the call concerned important shopping, and, at the last minute, to appear at the station without baggage and explaining that her mother had told her to stay in New York until she could join her there. Her aunt's apartment was open, she said;—and who connected with Miss Belden's school even remotely didn't know that Rosalind was Mabel Spencer's niece and all haloed and privileged in New York's high theatrical life through that connection?

While that bit of strategy had been enacted Mrs. Karanoff and Alice had been sitting peacefully all the

long afternoon sewing on Christmas gifts for Rosalind. The schoolroom was gay with silk and ribbon and lace, and fragrant with orris for little boudoir cushions that Rosalind would "love."

Alice was never to forget the winter peace of that afternoon. The Towers was still and warm with the security that thick walls and heavy glass give against a biting outer chill. The schoolroom windows were as clear as the frosty air itself, and the yellow curtains framed the grove where naked trees made lacey patterns against the sky. Alice was thinking of that line:

"Now are the woods all black, but still the sky is blue. . . ."

Mrs. Karanoff interrupted her thought by asking. "Did Nico go out to skate?" and she had answered that he had, adding: "I tried to get him to telephone Roger King to come over, but I might as well have urged him to lock himself in the cellar. He just does not feel free when other boys are with him. Will he ever outgrow it?"

"Lone wolf."

Mrs. Karanoff had said the words with meditative deliberation and added, "So often I think of that name for him. Gregarious Rosalind and solitary Nico—my little lambs. I shall never worry about Nico," she continued thoughtfully. "The only thing we can do for Nico is to stand by and let his genius choose its own course, while Rosalind, I feel, is like one of those free-spirited, bright-winged water creatures that skim on the surface of the lake. Perishable as gauze, joyous

as sunlight and all unknowingly dancing over depths of which it has no least conception. I was like that. Life seemed so simple to me when I was Rosalind's age. I said, 'I am master of my fate,' and proceeded to prove it. I took fate and all the furies in my two young hands. . . ." She clenched the hands, still young, and looked out into the mellowing light with unseeing eyes. "I juggled them to my purpose . . . fate, I mean, and all the furies."

Mrs. Karanoff returned to her sewing, and her next words: "I love this sachet. I know Rosalind will. . . ." were more lightly spoken. "She's shopping now; the sun has set in New York. She's thinking of her train, and getting just a little tremulous with excitement. I wonder if she's wearing the corsage Cornelius sent her. It was to be delivered at Miss Belden's early this morning." She lifted a twinkling face for a moment. "Mrs. King is becoming obvious in her interest, but I love her for wanting Rosalind. I do admire their stability as a family and their fine traditions. You never saw old Madame King; she was a dowager of regal mien." Again she glanced up with the whimsical smile. "If Madame King had known—the first night she met me—that her daughter-in-law would ever really want *my* child for her son, she would not have lived as long as she did!"

"Tell me," Alice persuaded.

"That old story?"

Alice considered: "I don't believe you have ever told me that story. I have heard you all speak of it,

refer to it; no more than that. What about Madame King?"

"Well, it was my first night in White Falls . . ." she began in a once-upon-a-time promissory tone, smiling at Alice as if the tale she knew so well must be equally familiar to Alice. "I hardly knew Mr. Karanoff, but he had asked me to come to his dinner-dance in costume. Of course, as you might know, my train was late that night, so he sent a car and driver to meet me and wait for me while I dressed, and then when I came into the dining room in my Pharaoh's daughter costume he left Madame King, who was on his right, to receive me, and after that he rather devoted himself to me. Madame King really had reason to resent me then. She never accepted me socially, and if she were living she would not want my Rosalind for Cornelius."

Alice seized upon the point in the hope of drawing Mrs. Karanoff out.

"How foolish! Not wanting *Rosalind!* Fortunately she has no voice in spoiling things for Cornelius. Why don't we see that most grown people interfere too much in the lives of their children? We think Corny is a perfect match for Rosalind, but we can't know . . . we don't know the possibilities for unhappiness Corny might bring Rosalind. Sometimes I think that Rosalind's social gifts may be as important as Nico's genius. Perhaps she will marry a future president who will need her social grace in a great career. She is much more apt to see the dim handwriting on the wall that is for her, than we are."

Mrs. Karanoff held an orchid ribbon bow against the cushion she had almost finished. "Is that the right place?" she asked, and held it at arm's length for Alice to see.

"It looks so to me, yes."

Mrs. Karanoff threaded her needle with orchid silk. "I agree with you," she said quietly, "except that there are situations where even that logic . . . does not apply."

Neither spoke after that until Mrs. Karanoff rose and shook the threads from her skirt. "I think I'll put on all my furry things and go out to skate with Nico. He'd like that, I believe."

When she was bundled in all her "furry things" she met her husband on the threshold of their bedroom. He had just come upstairs. "The telephone," he said. "I answered in the study. It's long distance. They want you."

Mrs. Karanoff sat on the edge of the little chair, and her voice was sweet in its impersonal "*Hel*lo." Alice, bringing both finished cushions into the room, showed them to Mr. Karanoff in smiling pantomime. Her lips, but not her voice, were saying: "For Rosalind. Aren't they lovely?" She heard Mrs. Karanoff murmur: "It must be Rosalind!" with happy excitement. And after a moment: "Yes. New York? This is Mrs. Karanoff." Then, "Oh, Rosalind dear, I hear you so distinctly!"

Mr. Karanoff limped to the fireplace and stood leaning with one arm on the mantle shelf. Mrs. Karanoff's listening face smiled from him to Alice then, almost

in the midst of her joy, a mute and piercing terror seemed to seize her. She was trying to speak and making no sound. Her shaking fingers pulled at the collar of her coat. "No, no. . . ." she was crying at last, "Rosalind, no. You didn't, you couldn't!" Her eyes closed and the color dropped, dropped from her face and left it livid.

Alice ran to her and knelt beside her while she put her arms close about her waist to keep her from falling. She looked at Mr. Karanoff and saw that he had not stirred. His face pointed and sharpened like a wolf's. His eyes were contracted to glittering slits, and the twist of his mouth was like a scar.

"Rosalind . . ." Mrs. Karanoff was crying hoarsely into the instrument. "Stop. Undo it. I will come to you!" Her head was lowered and a stillness covered her so that for a moment Alice could not feel her breathing. Then she was calling faintly, "Hello, hello. . . ."

She put down the receiver and tried to rise. Alice helped her and stood beside her still supporting her, not because she was unable to stand, but because she must face her husband's terrible eyes. She heard her barely breathing: "Rosalind . . . and Norris were married this . . . afterno. . . ." Her voice expired on the word; her agonized face was turned to Mr. Karanoff not in appeal, not in dependence, but in a tragic expression of surrender.

In the tightening stillness Alice heard her own dry lips asking inanely, "What shall we do?" and Mr. Karanoff, as if he answered her, yet addressed his wife

in a voice that isolated them together in their trouble: "Isn't it about time . . . you told the truth, Terry?"

XVI

THERE was nothing that she could do to help Mrs. Karanoff, it seemed. Alice felt that she must leave the room, ordered out by the tense concentration of Mr. Karanoff's stare, which excluded everything but himself and his wife from the fiery circle it drew about them. She went slowly to the door, afraid to leave the stricken woman, afraid to stay, wishing with a longing that she could hardly restrain from expression that Mrs. Karanoff would call her back. She needed her to stand between her and the wrath that must surely break upon her, perhaps in violence, yet she did not lift even a hand to detain her. She seemed to have a need so far, far beyond anything Alice had to give that she was letting her go as she would let a child go from her side.

Alice heard her say: "I must tell them. I must go to them." And she saw that for all the agonized urgency of her voice she was unable to move even a step. She seemed numbed save to the eyes opposite that kept their glittering daggers bared.

"Tell *me* the truth." Thank God he had spoken at last! Alice heard the answer: "You know the truth." The voice was as dull as the motionless body. "For a long time, Nicolai, you have known the truth." Her

eyes, suffused suddenly with tears, were on his face, not in fear; she was not afraid of him. She even bowed her head and held it in her hands whispering: "Rosalind. . . . Rosalind . . . To be punished more, and on and on through Rosalind. . . ."

There was a long silence while Alice moved slowly away, then Mr. Karanoff's altered voice—a voice that told her he knew he had not inspired fear—"You think of yourself and Rosalind. *Your* suffering. What of me? And Nico?" There was no answer, and in the stillness Alice heard their labored breathing. The door closed with a faint click and Mr. Karanoff spoke again as if to himself, "My mother; and my wife. What can I expect of my son?"

To that there was an answer. "Yourself, Nicolai. Include yourself, and your father!" There were no tears in her voice; there had been bitterness in his.

Alice stood against the door knowing that she must be ready for any possibility—waiting, listening, preparing with half her mind for the emergency of violence, yet wholly conscious of a very illness of guilt that somehow she shared with Mrs. Karanoff. From the first of her life in that house she had accepted the ghosts that haunted even the sunlit hours, but they had been presented to her as Mr. Karanoff's ghosts and as remote from her as his youth was remote. She had looked at them as through the far-seeing end of an opera glass save when they pressed unbearably upon his wife. Now that they were identified as Mrs. Karanoff's ghosts, the feat of readjustment was as difficult for her of

mental performance as a contortionist's act would have been of physical performance.

Not to fight for her belief in his wife as the innocent one, the sinned against, was to admit the suspicion that she had persistently refused to accept. Mr. Karanoff had said, "My mother; and my wife. . . ." and Mrs. Karanoff had not denied his right to link her with his mother, whose illigitimate child he was.

There were movements in the room and their voices, quickened, sharp, neither cringing before the other. In her agitation Alice had not heard all they said until Mrs. Karanoff's "No. I have never lied to you! I gave you opportunity to ask and you wouldn't. You didn't because you knew I would tell you the truth. You went away. . . ." She was interrupted by an angry: "Yes. And why? Because, like a fool, I loved you . . . both."

" 'Like a fool. . . .' " The courage in that voice that took the bitter pill and bit upon it. Why didn't she blame him? Why wasn't it probable that faults in him had driven her, who was so much younger, to committing wrongs that were his before they became hers? Alice knew the answer even as her heart asked the question. It was because to Mrs. Karanoff self-pity, self-justification were abominations. She would not add little sins to her greater transgression.

After another silence when Alice almost flung the door open, she heard Mr. Karanoff's step and then his voice at the telephone giving a number. "I'll get an airplane for you," he said. "You must be ready at once."

"Oh. . . ." It was a cry of relief. "If you could." Alice heard her own name and knew that the moment of physical danger was past.

She opened the door and saw Mrs. Karanoff standing, swaying as if she were ready to sink, but listening to her husband, who was saying into the telephone: "I want the man who's in charge of the flying field. Get him for me as quick as possible. Do you know his name? McQuigg? Get a plane for me no matter what you have to do."

Tears were streaking Mrs. Karanoff's blanched cheeks. Her face was so colorless that the wet of the tears was gray in contrast. Her lips were stiffened and dark like coagulated blood.

"You're going with me?" She was asking her husband, not as if she wanted him, but as if she must know what he intended to do.

"No."

"Then . . .?" She had turned to Alice. She held what she had meant to say unuttered because she would not ask Alice to share her agony. Unless she offered to go with her to New York she would go alone.

"I'll go with you!" Alice cried with such eagerness that her throat closed painfully. She went to Mrs. Karanoff and they looked into each other's eyes through blurring mists while the only exchange in words was husky and broken.

The sharp burr of the telephone eased their tension, and as Mr. Karanoff answered—"There'll be two passengers, two women"—Alice began to look about to

see what she could do. She heard him ask, "How soon will he be ready . . . ? I'll have them there."

"You must be ready in half an hour," he told Alice. "No fussy packing. Dress warmly and eat all you can." He limped to the house telephone and called the kitchen; he ordered food. . . .

When Alice returned, ready with a small bag packed, she found Mrs. Karanoff quieter, her face washed of its tears, and she was packing an over-night case calmly, with hands that hardly trembled. Alice marvelled, and then she saw that she was putting anything she happened to touch into the bag. Books from the table beside her, one of the new cushions she had made, a paper cutter. Her face was a blank.

Alice took the bag and emptied it on the bed.

It was a wild, sickening period that seemed, like a nightmare, to be whirling with speed yet never getting on until they were in the car flying through the streets and out the road that led to the chasm. A right turn brought them to the flying field, where a little group of men waited, dim stork-like figures in the half darkness.

A huge searchlight shone full on the plane and on Mr. Karanoff, who began investigating things, asking questions in his staccato voice. They took the two women into a little office, where they were fitted into leather coats. Alice saw that the men were smiling; they joked and worked without the frenzy that had driven her, and sighing, she tried to relax while she told herself that the thing that had struck The Towers

had not been general; others were not quivering from the rack and rage of calamity as they were.

"What time shall we be in New York?" she asked, and heard her voice like any normal voice, betraying nothing of all she felt.

Mr. Karanoff came in. "Listen to me, Terry. You listen too, Alice. I'll find out what hotel the telephone call came from. I'll telegraph Rosalind that you are on your way by plane and make certain that there'll be a car for you at the landing field. You're to make just one stop, Cleveland. You'll be in New York by two o'clock. Try to relax. They'll give you hot food when you stop. You need it for fuel as much as the engine needs gas."

He opened the door and they went out to the plane, stiff in their leather garments, with great glasses that were like masks covering such little of their faces as the helmets left exposed. Alice shook so that her knees knocked together. She saw the men put their hands under Mrs. Karanoff's arms to help her into the cockpit and her quick movement toward her husband—an eager spontaneous gesture, her leather mittened hands spread, her face lifted. For a moment Alice thought he meant to turn from her, then he moved forward and her hands, her face, were against his chest, his arms were about her and his mouth pressed to the top of her helmet. Immediately he stepped back, but one hand lingered on her shoulder as she turned to the men and let them lift her into the plane. Alice followed and there was a great tucking of robes. The roar of the motor

drowned all sound, but she could see the man McQuigg shouting, the pilot leaning toward him. Then they were off.

Darkness, a wall of wind, a motor that bellowed like a mad thing, louder and louder, and a sensation more terrifying than any she had ever known. Nothing beneath them, nothing above, the bouncing and swaying on nothing; up, up, pointing toward infinite blackness while the lights of White Falls dropped away like stars falling—like a firmament sinking far beneath them. They were going to cross over Lake Michigan and Lake Erie. There would be four hours of this before they touched earth in Cleveland.

It was some time before Alice was aware that in her terror she was clutching Mrs. Karanoff, who was not shaking at all, but patting Alice's taut arm as if to soothe her. Immediately she loosed her frenzied hold. Mrs. Karanoff was not thinking of their danger, but of Rosalind, of Norris, of the young eyes she must face and answer. She was riding to a judgment that was worse than anything of disaster that could happen on the journey. Could it be that she was wishing for an end of her torment by such a death? Why shouldn't she? Why not pray for the merciful release of it as well as for the courage to go through confession, accusation and the hell of a child's condemnation? Rosalind's shock would be complete. She was in no sense prepared to learn of any fault in her mother. Would Mr. Karanoff's telegram give her any hint of what was coming? Would Rosalind be at the landing field

at two o'clock on Sunday morning? Rosalind! Poor Pandora who had dared to seek into the forbidden! No, she would await her mother's coming at the hotel while childish sleep tugged at her eyelids and Norris's love tugged at her heart.

After a while they were able to look down and to distinguish a town's jeweling of lights from the sky's constellations, and when they were over Lake Michigan they could see an occasional edge of white and know it for what it was—boiling foam of angry water.

At half past six there were the lights of a town again, and one of the men handed back a slip of paper and a pencil. He had written: "We're over Muskegon. Are you beginning to like it?"

Mrs. Karanoff read it and made no sign. Her eyes were closed while Alice wrote a reply that was more reassuring than true.

Soon they saw the sky to the east, bright as sunrise above Detroit and then, after an hour over another black abyss that was Lake Erie, Cleveland greeted them with long brilliant fingers of light that swept the sky in beckoning arcs. Blast furnaces gave their glow of ruby light, tall buildings looked like lighted ships on end, and necklaces of twinkling jewels radiated far and far from the central blaze of brightness to edges of black night again.

It was not until the nose of their plane turned earthward for the landing that she remembered that Dr. Field was somewhere down there near them. Would

Norris have told him? Might he be on his way to New York too?

XVII

THE little clock on the instrument board showed that it was after two when they circled over Roosevelt Field. The last hours seemed interminable, for Mrs. Karanoff had been ill since eleven o'clock, when her courage, both spiritual and physical, had failed her. The roaring and dropping, the winging upward and swaying of the plane had been bravely endured at first when she was fresh and braced for the strain. As her strength waned she had grown worse and worse until at last she had become helpless with illness.

When, after a final drop, Alice felt the solid earth beneath them she was holding in numbed arms the limp body in its heavy leather trappings.

Not until they were in the automobile that waited for them did Mrs. Karanoff realize where she was. She had seemed to be conscious when they were taking off her leather coat, but she had not spoken save to say Alice's name. Now she lay back in her dark clothes against the dark cushions, the death-like white of her face as still and blank as if it were a heart-shaped piece of paper pinned on the upholstery.

The quiet of the taxi after nine hours of roaring motor and wind was a peace so welcome that Alice

felt tears of relief running down her cheeks; the relief of sleeping streets in which the arc lights shone on emptiness, the soft blurred sound of tires on wet pavement. The darkened buildings were beautiful—beautiful with quiet.

Somebody at Roosevelt Field had given her a telegram that their pilot had read to her. It was signed by Mr. Karanoff and said: *Rosalind at the Biltmore unaware of the importance of your business with her.*

Unaware of the secret that was traveling so swiftly to answer her demand! Poor, poor wilful little girl whose faith in her mother, whose love and adoration of her mother were the foundation rocks of her happiness!

Alice touched Mrs. Karanoff's hand. "Are you better?" she asked her. "Do you know where you are?"

"Yes." She opened her eyes.

"I have this telegram for you. From Mr. Karanoff. Shall I read it?"

"Yes. . . ." She sat forward, swaying, one hand hunting for something to hold to. She was still reeling with dizziness.

Alice read the telegram once, then again, slowly. There was no response. Her eyes closed, and soon she leaned back again and was still.

She walked into the hotel and stood like stone while Alice registered, and a kindly night clerk spoke of telegrams, of Mr. Field's suite. They followed a bell boy, holding each other because their feet were still uncertain. As the elevator carried them up Alice was

following a dull round of thought about electricity and the part it had had in the tragedy of that one day. The telephone, the automobile, the plane, the taxi, the telegraph, the elevator. She was thinking only of that with the little numbed remnant of her mind while they walked down a corridor. And then, all thought of electricity was scattered by the bell boy's knocking. The door was thrown open and Rosalind was there.

Alice did not know until she saw Rosalind's dear face blurred and strange that she, too, was ill, that she and Mrs. Karanoff were shocking sights, drunken with air sickness, spent and disheveled. She saw Norris look at Rosalind in alarm and begin to speak, and Rosalind's sharp gesture that stopped him. They were both staring at Mrs. Karanoff, who looked like a woman walking in her grave clothes. She was upright, stiff with determination to go through the thing she had come for, and when Rosalind would have kissed her she put her hands on her shoulders and pushed her back. Rosalind's trembling features tightened and hardened and her eyes smoldered with stubborn fire.

"Rosalind." Mrs. Karanoff's lips were stiff; her eyes black with agony. "This marriage must be annulled."

"Why?"

"Because Norris. . . . Norris is. . . ."

Norris had cried, "Don't!" and pushed between Mrs. Karanoff and Rosalind, flinging Rosalind back, but he had heard the words spoken even before his outcry.

". . . your brother."

"She's sick! She's not fit. Don't believe her!"

They put Mrs. Karanoff into a chair and Rosalind knelt on one side and Alice on the other. They chaffed her hands; their voices were inarticulate. Rosalind's head was sinking slowly; it sank until it rested on the chair arm and her hands dropped from her mother's. She too had heard.

They were in twin beds in a darkened room. Rosalind was kneeling beside her mother and Norris was pleading his own guilt—. "I shouldn't have let her. . . . I should have known. I blame myself. . . ." Broken phrases like that until the answering silence showed him the futility of chivalry in such a moment. Then the silence took him too like an illness, and he stood by the window, his face in his hands, and heard the slow questions and answers between Rosalind and her mother.

"It was daddy . . . ? and Norris's mother?"

"Oh . . . no." Mrs. Karanoff's voice that was like a smothered moan, and Rosalind's cry when at last she understood: "Not *you!* Mother, tell me! Not *you!*"

Then Norris was gone from the room and there was only the pitiful sound of Rosalind's agony—Pandora stung to the very death by the thing she had released.

That was in the dark hours before the dawn of December eighteenth, the day Alice was to hear Mrs. Karanoff's story and to read the letter Rosalind had written Thanksgiving night. It was Rosalind who was

stricken almost to paralysis by shock that day. All sympathy, all tenderness, all concern centered in Rosalind. Norris was gone; the suite, two floors above the one they had at Thanksgiving, was like a hospital. The doctor sat by Rosalind a long time that afternoon. When he came into the sitting room he said to the nurse, "Continue the sedative. . . ." His eyes were averted. "You must respect her wish not to see her mother."

Her wish not to see her mother! Did she still refuse? That morning Alice had been waked by sounds of a struggle—Mrs. Karanoff at Rosalind's bedside pleading to be heard; Rosalind's refusal and the nurse's firm interference. Mrs. Karanoff's cry, "Rosalind, don't punish me so! I can make you understand. . . ."

She was brought back to her bed.

XVIII

"YOU knew, Alice? I thought you knew."

"I suppose I did; I couldn't believe it. I . . . locked it out."

"That day when you were sitting by the guest house . . . and we passed?"

When the story was told, Alice went out to walk in the frosty wind where space and the hum of the city would help her to the greatness of vision she needed. It was Sunday; the very emptiness of the

streets, the sleeping shops added to the sense of immensity which, instinctively, she sought.

That minor voice that had made honest confession was in her ears. Not the roar of the elevated, the exclaiming horns of motors, the rumble of buses could drown the sound of it. Of no other woman would she have said the things she had said of herself. There had been no excuses offered as excuses. The facts of her strange problem and the journey of her questing mind through the bewilderment of it all had needed no embellishing, nor had they been given any.

It began long ago, even before Mrs. Karanoff's marriage—for that matter even before her birth—with the philosophy of expediency on which she was reared. The confession had barely included a reminder of that; Alice had known; and she had known, too, that before their marriage, Mr. Karanoff had told that very young girl that though he loved her enough to marry her he would never have considered marriage with her or anybody save for the fact that he wanted to establish a family, to have an heir who would carry on for him. "He didn't cheat me or trick me; he played fair." Thus Mrs. Karanoff had exonerated him that morning.

"Clara told you how a year passed and there was no child, and how his temper made things terrible for me. It seems to me, looking back, that I was superignorant! It wasn't just because I was so young; it was because I had no . . . no talent for knowing certain things. When he threatened divorce I believed he meant it. And I loved him. I couldn't see through or around

that overwhelming love. I wanted to please him, I wanted to do the thing that was expected of me, yet everything I did angered him. There came a day when he went away angry, and that day brought a series of those crises that I didn't know were crises, when each little event was like a beckoning hand leading me along a false path that promised a way out. . . .

"It all happened so fast. It was so complicated—the motives and the impulses. I knew that . . . Dr. Field loved me; he was kind and understanding. Not like Nicolai, not made of the glory and the madness and the pain that was Nicolai. No woman could love him if she had ever had the love of a Nicolai! He needed my help, for he was in trouble. Poor; no practice. If he could be successful with me . . . as a patient. . . . You see, don't you? It was my chance—as I saw it my only chance for giving Nicolai what he wanted, and so—I accepted his love. Alice, it was all for love of Nicolai. You believe me, don't you? The . . . other was just my friend. He was clean and young. Can't you understand how you may so love one man that you will let another serve him?

"Have you ever understood, Alice, how it is that certain people look on moral freedom with wide tolerance until their own husbands or their wives behave with that freedom? Even yet I am bewildered about that. If ninety-nine may be unscrupulous why not the one hundredth? Nicolai never even had argument with himself about his own liberty; at that time he was like Cæsar, who was as free as the unknowing beasts him-

self, yet he divorced his wife because a faint breath of doubt had touched her! Cæsar's wife must be above suspicion; so, since she was not quite above suspicion, even though he believed her guiltless, he rid himself of her! On the one hand, Cæsar, on the other, Napoleon, who knew of Josephine's lovers and took them quite for granted. Many a man marries one who is known to be promiscuous, wiping out all counts against her generously, because he loves her.

"I had been reared in that atmosphere of free love; I had married a man of easy virtue, and yet I found that for me such freedom was denied. I was the one hundreth. I was tethered within walls.

"It seemed to me I had chosen the simple course; I thought the curtain would drop on the incident of my necessity and that that would be the end of it. *I* would know, with a dagger in my heart, that Nicolai had exacted that sacrifice of me, for at that time I *blamed Nicolai. He* had refused to let me fail. The guilt was his. You see?

"Well, *I* saw. I saw just that and nothing beyond or above or below. If I had been the sort who could be disillusioned, I would have grown cynical then, but that wasn't my nature. Instead I began to sense the things Dr. Field was suffering.

"So little was said—nothing really. Life went on quietly—you know the undertow beneath the smiling sea. I began to feel Dr. Field's hatred of our secrecy, his fear, his—sense of sin . . . and I was dragged into it with him. I was all tangled in a dreadful nightmare

of his suffering. He had given his child to Nicolai, and he hated Nicolai.

"Men don't have to talk to make you know they want to kill. I knew I might be the cause of worse and worse tragedy between those two. Dr. Field was making his fight for success with his love of Norris like a shield on his arm. Another Norris, whom he would have no right to love, no claim upon, was to be given into Nicolai's keeping. I know now that that was more terrible for him than anything I bore—then.

"I suppose you wonder why I stayed. I've often marveled at that something in human beings that makes them stick through such situations. I think you know that above all things I desire to be honest, true to myself in thought and deed. Well . . . I stayed because I loved Nicolai. If I am self-deceived then the only other reason I know is this: there's a something in the souls of certain ones of us that is stubborn. We can't give up; we can't turn back; we have to go on through. I don't know why, but I know it is so with me. I shall go on through, and whether it's right or wrong I shall never *know*, but I shall *believe* it's right. Surely if staying was cowardice, I would have died of my fears. I did try to run away that time before Rosalind was born when Nicolai was bored by my illness and went to Europe with . . . Fanny Reeves.

"That was when I tried to think that quitting was right, but later, deciding to come back was easier done than the running away had been. I had made a wild tangle in the lives of two men, of two children, of . . .

others. That stubborn something in me had to come back to struggle through the job.

"I know there are people . . . women who would have said 'what's done is done' and locked the thing away to die of neglect. That's the kind who 'get away' with things. They don't know conscience, and so they don't know fear. I did know both. My bedfellows, they were then, in darkness. There was no light, no light. I wanted to be *good,* to be wise, to know the truth of things. . . . And that desire was my birth. I began to learn and to pay; more and more; on and on; all the time. But I grew. I conquered fears. I mastered them—all but one—the fear that Nicolai would cease to love me. I was afraid of him, but more afraid of losing him. I prayed God to give me time to make him know I was good before he found out . . . about Rosalind. And Rosalind—herself! I had to make her love me so that she would believe in the new me. I knew I could accomplish all I desired if I could have *time* to make my love felt. And then, Nico came. Can you see what that meant to me? Nico looking so like Nicolai—the son Nicolai wanted, at last. Oh, the compensation of that!

"You know the rest, Alice. That day when you were sitting by the guest house. . . . I wasn't sorry you heard. I knew you wouldn't condemn me, but Alice, *you wouldn't have done what I did.* Your kind of girl couldn't even have thought of solving her problem as I did. That is one of my punishments—knowing I was the *kind* that would think of that way out. You

refused love and marriage because you would not shadow a child's life. I sought illicit love with no thought of the price my child might pay. And that is why Rosalind punishes me. . . . *She knows.* For her own sake I have taught her to be wise in moral distinctions, and now, in her wisdom, she finds me guilty of a thing she couldn't do. To her . . . I am unclean."

Yes, to Rosalind she was unclean; but Rosalind knew nothing but the stark, shocking fact. To know so little was more dangerous to her in her condition than to know all the truth, for what she lacked in exact knowledge her imagination would supply to her further undoing.

Alice had walked only as far as a bus stop. She was too spent to take the exercise she craved. She had lived so exhaustingly in the twenty-four hours that were just past that she felt breathless and weak-kneed. She rode only a short time, however, descending somewhere in the eighties and walking slowly east from Fifth Avenue. The husky minor voice was going on and on in her ears while she was seeing the severe tight-elbowed domiciles of New York. Before one house she stopped as she might have stopped a moment beside a rare little old lady, should such a one trouble to smile at her, for the house was smiling through ribbon-decked Christmas wreaths hung on its old white door, and outside its shining windows. It was a plain little frame house impeccably white among narrow, hard-visaged apartments boasting their stone.

She strolled on a way, then came back to the avenue with quickened steps. It was as if she had heard that minor voice calling her. Rosalind was measuring her mother against her governess, and finding her mother so wanting that as yet she could not face her. Only she, Alice, could plead with her for mercy.

It was twilight when she arrived back at the hotel. Rosalind was lying still and straight the way the nurse had arranged her, her hair in order, her hands on the cover. Slow tears ran across her temples.

When Alice sat down in the chair the doctor had just vacated, she stirred slightly and her fingers closed about Alice's hand.

"Dear, you must let me help you."

"If you could."

"I think they have given you too much sedative, Rosalind. I know you want all the truth now so that you'll understand." Her voice was steady, yet she had need to press Rosalind's hand because of the trembling of her own. Was she going to try to justify her mother, and, if not, how help the stricken child? It was for her lost mother that she was sick.

She began again. "You wanted the truth, Rosalind, and now you're . . . established in it. Strange as it seems, your experience is not unlike mine. I was six years older than you when I learned that the man I had loved as my father was not my father. You see . . . I know. I too had to give up my lover and readjust myself to entirely different conditions, but in time I

was glad because I knew the truth. I knew my background. We all have the right to know the stuff of which we are made, the blood, the ideals, the passions, the achievements that have fused into the chemical combination that is our ego. I say that poorly, but because I have gone through it you know that it means a definite thing to me."

Alice paused a moment before she went on, softly, deliberately impressive in her choice of words. "The expression of strange and tremendous cross currents of love went into you Rosalind,—the love of your mother for her husband; the love of your father for your mother. Do you follow me?"

"Yes."

"Because her husband wanted you peculiarly, she accepted the love of a man who risked the loss of everything else that was dear to him for love of her. Rosalind, yesterday you did a thing I wouldn't have believed possible of you. You lied, you risked the loss of everything you hold dear that you might have Norris. Aren't you very like your parents? Can't you understand them just by understanding yourself?"

The tears had stopped; Rosalind's eyes were open.

"I have heard your mother's story. I feel certain that you aren't imagining it as it was, at all. You must let her tell you."

Rosalind's head turned from side to side, her lip was caught between her teeth. Then: "To think of hearing her admit. . . ." Her face drew into an expression of agonized grief.

"Darling!" Alice pleaded. "It was years ago. You know how good and true she is now, don't you, Rosalind?"

"I thought I knew."

"You do know. You know she's made her . . . trouble a means of growth. That is what you have got to do. She has done it; you won't let this experience throw you back, will you, Rosalind? I expect you to go forward right through this open door of opportunity to greater strength, more perfect love, bigger vision. If you'll try not to think of how you've been wronged, but of what you're going to do with this chance to prove yourself, it may be easier for you."

"I feel . . . all alone," Rosalind cried, like a child that is lost and knows only that it is lost. Alice's very talk of strength had made her feel her weakness. She whispered, "Mother . . . a stranger. I have no father!"

She was still sorry for herself! And to be forgiven for it. Last evening at this time she had had father, mother, brother, lover. By the speaking of a word she had been bereft. . . .

There was no use in talking to her. She couldn't think; she could only feel the tearing pain of her uprooting. Like a tender plant, seized and torn from its sheltered place, tossed out to await a different setting, she was faint with bewilderment and shock.

Alice went down into the hotel to telephone Mr. Karanoff—to tell him Rosalind needed him. The report that came back to her was that Mr. Karanoff was on his way to New York.

XIX

HE arrived at the hotel early the next morning. His wife was dressing when the nurse answered his knock on the sitting room door.

Alice saw Mrs. Karanoff listen, transfixed by the sudden sound of his voice. "A nurse? Who's sick here?" he began. "I'm Mr. Karanoff."

"Just a moment, Mr. Karanoff. I'm not sure the doctor. . . ."

She was interrupted by Rosalind's voice. "Please! I want to see him."

They heard the nurse ask him to wait. And then, after a moment when a door had opened and closed, her return as she said, "Miss Rosalind wants to see you. She is suffering from shock and is slightly under the influence of a sedative. Try not to excite her."

Alice opened the door from Mrs. Karanoff's room as he went in to Rosalind, and she heard the cry: "Daddy!" The nurse held up a silencing finger and stood listening. They heard his reassuring murmur: "My darling. My darling. . . ."

For an hour they talked together while Mrs. Karanoff paced the sitting room, a palm laid over each sunken cheek, her eyes unseeing. Their voices were too low for her to hear, and she did not seem to be listening, but to be waiting, waiting till they should make some sign of their verdict on her.

At last she went to the desk that the nurse had

made her own, and wrote, slowly, a sentence that she handed to Alice to read. "Do you think I might put that under the door?"

She had written: *I am waiting for you to let me join you. T.*

"Let me give it to them." Alice rose and moved toward the door, and Mrs. Karanoff did not stop her. She knocked and Mr. Karanoff answered instantly: "Don't disturb us."

Alice put the paper under the door, but it brought no response. Again they waited in a long silence that was broken only by a telephone call. It was Dr. Field, who was at the Hotel Roosevelt. He wanted to know if he might come over, or if he could do anything to serve them all in any way. Alice repeated the message and Mrs. Karanoff shook her head, and for the first time since the tragic moment of Rosalind's call to White Falls, the color rose in her face, hot and dull as fever. "He says, 'Tell her I shall wait here in case she will let me see her.'" Alice told her, but she had turned her back and was pacing down the room again.

When finally Mr. Karanoff came out of Rosalind's room, Alice was alone, for the nurse had urged Mrs. Karanoff to rest and had taken her into her bedroom. He gave Alice a sign for quiet and asked, in a low voice, "Are *you* all right? Steady again?"

"Almost. I'm able for anything."

"Then we must get them home—back where they'll have to face conditions—friends and servants. Each other. We can trust you to keep silence?"

"You know you can."

"To lie, if need be?"

"Well . . . if need be; yes." She did not dare to smile for he was very serious; his face was carved deep with lines and his eyes were shot with the red of sleeplessness.

He said slowly, as if the depth of Rosalind's love for him were a surprise and a growing wonder, "The thought . . . that I wouldn't want her any more—give her my name—seems to have been not the least of all she was suffering." He was staring beyond Alice. "She felt homeless . . . alone . . ."

"And you reassured her? Could you do that?"

His black eyes met hers in a look of understanding. "You know the time when I learned the truth . . . of this. I could reassure her because the thing she wanted had been done eight years ago. I made my choice then."

He sat down and leaned forward, turning his head from side to side as if the desire to have outlet in talk for the eight years of repression was a need he was tempted to allow himself. It was evident that he was excited by the unexpected quality he had found in Rosalind's appeal, and relieved that at last the secret was out, a vital issue between them rather than a dark menace threatening everything he held precious. That summer when he had gone suddenly to Europe had been his time of struggle; it was then that he had weighed his natural desire for violence and revenge against the peace he needed in his painful condition of health, the honor of his name, and his son's happiness.

Further—he had loved his wife and her child; and he was much too keen not to know that he had a heavy responsibility in the thing she had done.

Knowing him as she did, Alice could almost see how he had weighed and measured the advantages of revenge against the disadvantages. A Nicolai Karanoff would never admit to the world at large that a woman had duped him for ten years, especially a woman he had judged worthy of marrying, one whom he supposed to be neither astute nor complex. The qualities she had heard him disparage in Dr. Field were exactly the qualities that he would consider beneath contempt in an adversary. A man fought with his equals, not his inferiors—such would be his point of view. He could punish; he still would punish his wife daily, exquisitely, as long as she lived, for she loved him enough to take it and bear it as Alice had seen her bear it year after year. And he would suffer because he punished her. He would want not to; his heart would cry out against his own cruelty, but because of the thing she had done he would be obliged by every law of his nature to exact the penalty of her. He would whip her and he would kiss her wounds.

Poor things, bound by their mutual love that would let neither of them go!

Alice waited for Mr. Karanoff to continue, while the memory of his wife's story became even more vivid to her than when she had listened to its broken recital. This man could be stirred to the profoundest depths of his tenderness by Rosalind's youth and dependence,

yet did he realize that his wife had been little older than Rosalind when she too had done an extreme thing for the solving of a problem that tormented her? He had been twice her age; he had been older then by several years than his wife was now. Did he remember that? And didn't he know that an impulsive wrong done in youth was seldom indicative of the sort of life that was to follow? Young things reacted instantly to their impulses. An idea; an act. Thunder; lightning.

In the year of his wife's one great fault he had committed several of a series without the excuse of youth and impulse. Deliberately, selfishly, he had gone his way until now his virtues were enhanced, made to seem more remarkable than they were by contrast to that faulty past. One took for granted the virtues of the good, and was loud in extolment of the virtues of sinners such as he.

At that moment Alice disliked his sort intensely, and it was in that moment that he looked up at her. What he had meant to say was checked by the expression he saw on her face. Understanding leaped between them, and he said sharply. "Well! If you think it, why not say it?"

Alice lowered her tell-tale eyes and bit her lip till it hurt. She wanted to say it; hate had her fast just then, but she was tongue-tied with confusion.

"You've been listening to my wife's story."

At that she looked up. "I have. It rings true. It's the only kind of story that could possibly explain . . . what she did."

"It was all my fault, I suppose. I drove her to it. My demands, my bad temper justify her. Is that it?"

"You know her—and me—better than to think we reason in that fashion. I don't condemn anybody, either. What you saw in my face was my dislike of myself for admiring your virtues the way I do. I found myself so grateful to you for not failing Rosalind that . . . that. . . ."

"Well; what?"

"Simply because you have done hundreds of bad things is no reason for admiring you excessively when you are decent."

He smiled. He was flattered! She was glad of that. She would flatter him more and often if it would help toward peace and security for Rosalind.

"I am merely decent then?"

"More than that. You are wise. You know when you are well off."

"You make me quite a hero, don't you? I have shown no self-control, no charity, no generosity!" He waited for her to answer while she stood looking down at a piece of paper that she folded and refolded nervously. It was not easy for her to flatter him, after all. When the silence told her that he understood her altered mood, she said, "When do you want to start home? And what can I do to help most? You know I'll do anything in the world I can. . . ."

He was not looking at her, his mood had changed too, and he was thinking intently, for he said, as if he hadn't heard her questions—"I tried to make Rosa-

lind understand . . . her mother's provocation." His eyes reddened with unaccustomed tears; his nostrils flared. "I told her I was much to blame. I told her why. I wish it had had more effect."

Again her peculiar liking for him that so easily became the excessive admiration she disapproved in herself, returned stronger than ever. "Surely it will have effect later. When she is well." She was in complete sympathy with him just then. Because of that she went back to the point of their divergence.

"I told you Mrs. Karanoff had told me her story, and you assumed that she had blamed you. She didn't; she wouldn't. She said that what she had done was her own wrong and nobody else's. She wouldn't blame . . .

"I know. . . ."

"She said that as far as he was concerned all the fault was her own. She said that if she had been the wise, fine girl she should have been she would never have thought of solving her problem the way she did."

"She said that? You're sure you're not putting that into her mouth because your sympathy is with her?" His look was going through her like needles.

"Of course I'm sure! She said that. She knows it's true."

"So do I know it's true! And there we are! It's only the callow cad who'll tell you every woman has her price. I know better."

"She's above price now." Alice's courage, never very great in his presence, was at flood tide. She dared: "Will you admit to me that you know that to be true?"

"Certainly I will. My decision eight years ago proves that." The answer was almost perfunctory. His thought had tightened and narrowed, excluding her. From his face, it was possible to suppose that he was thinking again, "My mother and my wife." There were women above price, but the two nearest and dearest to him had been for sale.

XX

HER long talk with Mr. Karanoff was the beginning of Rosalind's recovery. She was not outcast, nameless, despised as she had feared she would be, and the knowledge that he had loved her for eight years knowing that she was not his child gave the whole experience perspective. If he had known the truth and had lived on without undue outward disturbance, so could she.

She asked for food, and when she had eaten a belated breakfast she rose and dressed herself. Though her voice was husky with weakness and she moved cautiously, the familiar sureness of tone and directness of gaze had returned to her manner by the time she was ready to see her mother.

As she approached the interview, delayed because Mr. Karanoff was talking with his wife, she was secure behind the crystal mask she knew so well how to wear. Beneath it she was invulnerable to emotion; through it she looked the same soft little Rosalind, grown grave

and thin and pale. Whatever she thought and felt, Alice knew that while she wore it she would betray nothing save what she considered right. If she chose to be cruel she would be cruel briefly and quietly; if kindness was her idea of the justice of the case she would be wholly kind, but not impulsive in the expression of it.

Her appearance an hour after she went into her mother's room confirmed this prophecy. She had kept her detachment; she had listened only with her ears, not her heart; she had answered as the girls at Miss Belden's would expect a good sport to answer.

"I'll get used to the thought of it, mother," she said in conclusion. "You know I'll try."

"Won't you talk about it to me now, Rosalind? Won't you ask me any question you want to?" Her mother's voice and face begged for a token that would reveal something of her thought. It would have been easier to hear execration than to listen to further dutiful courtesies.

Rosalind considered; then: "The day of that terrible luncheon when Norris was there. . . . Why didn't you tell me then? Quietly, like to-day? I had that right. Or why couldn't Dr. Field have told Norris? Men forgive each other . . . such things. Instead, he interfered in his mail!"

"That interference was because I asked it. Rosalind, would you really have expected us to tell this . . . unless we were obliged to? To *you* whom we hoped to save?"

Rosalind did not answer. Her look was direct and

appraising; she could have answered, but she would not. It was as if she sensed different standards of truth between herself and her mother, as if, instinctively, she knew, and had always known what, even yet, her mother could not perceive. Her honest eyes were asking with a cold passion of scorn, "Who wants to be saved and kept secure in the preservative of a lie?"

The silence and the long straight look broke Mrs. Karanoff's control. Her hands flew to cover her quivering mouth. Until then she had held her own emotions in check as successfully as Rosalind. Her voice had poured out, yet haltingly, the confession that so often she had rehearsed in secret. As she talked, bending forward, she had kept her unfaltering gaze on Rosalind's expressionless profile that sometimes was lifted, sometimes downcast, and always her gentle—"You understand, dear?" had been answered by a murmured "Yes."

Rosalind seemed not to see the frenzied movement. She stood a moment gazing fixedly before her, weighing her mother's love for her against her hatred of a lie. The love she took for granted because she was a child, and, because she was a child, she laid fast and narrow boundaries for the truth.

She turned slowly and went to her mother, kissed her forehead and, putting an arm about her shoulders, pressed her lips to her hair. "You'll give me time, mother? I'll get used to it."

The only answer was the passionate response of her mother's trembling arms about her.

Rosalind seemed bent on ignoring all signs of feeling. She asked, hesitatingly, with distaste for the question, yet as if it were the next step in the business of readjustment: "What am I to call . . . daddy, now? I can't say that name to him. . . ."

Mrs. Karanoff's head moved slowly. A problem so small could hardly touch her then.

"He was sweet to me. I'm going to try to learn to run the mills."

"You told him so?"

"No. But I will."

"You'll make him . . . happy."

Rosalind drew away from her mother. She kissed her hair again lightly and tiptoed quietly from the room.

Tiptoed! Went out from that fathomless grief as if the tread of her little shoes might intensify the throbbing pain of her cruelty. To drive a knife into that dear heart and leave it there, yet be at pains to save the sufferer from jar. . . . Oh, Rosalind! Dual personification of love and strength—her father and her mother, fire and gold; abandon of fire, strength of fine gold. When would the spark of the divine fire of love that lit the holy altar of her heart burn out the littleness of virtue that, like small craft, was taking the leviathan of her compassion out to sea?

Alice, watching her, marveling, found as never before in her experience with that difficult family that the hands-off policy which was the secret of her success with them was well-nigh impossible of achievement. Not to wrestle with Rosalind, not to cry "shame" and

"prig" with such passionateness of rebuke as would make wooden idols of Rosalind's little gods, demanded a control that, for once, she did not want to exercise.

As she went toward Rosalind's room, bent on anathema, the still voice spoke: *Condemn not those that condemn.* That commandment in her decalogue that she broke oftenest in her thought, cried from the silence to restrain her, and swung her back to the refuge of the love universal, that touchstone on which all her problems were resolved. Her own deep personal love for Rosalind and Rosalind's mother was her safety vent.

She went back to the room Rosalind had just left, not on tiptoe, but smiling through her tears of tenderness. ". . . I'll cover you; I'd like to sit beside you here." And then: "She is so young. . . ." Her husky voice achieved a note of pleading for the words. "Her shock is so profound. . . ." Thus she apologized to this mother for her child while her cold hands drew soft stroking caresses across the hot forehead. "When her relenting comes it will be greater, deeper, more permanent because it is being dammed just now. You believe that, don't you? You believe your love for her will win?"

"In time; I know it will." A trembling hand thanked her with a pressure that did not relax. "No tears for me, Alice. Don't let me hurt you too."

"You have never hurt me. You have been my friend, always."

"Then . . . I want to tell you something. You will believe me. . . ."

"Yes. Tell me."

"That her virtue . . . the virtue that can stone me is more precious to me, kinder than an easy . . . pardon would have been because it tells me that she, herself, is safe."

She could say that! She could say it, and yet she would not say it until she had had assurance of the loyalty that Alice had supposed she took for granted.

Alice broke then. There were no words, only her weeping that was the surrender of a reticence, of a stoical repression that had held overlong; nor could she find, though she groped desperately for it, the lever of her control. All the motley sentiments, dear memories and gratitudes of a dozen years crashed the gates and ran shouting in her tears; and the one for whom she wept turned comforter. "Your tears have helped me. See, I'm better now."

They left New York that night. As they gathered in the sitting room ready for the start, Mr. Karanoff stood looking from one strained face to another—at his wife's gray pallor, at Rosalind's thin, rouge-pink cheeks beneath dark ringed eyes, at Alice's swollen features, and commanded the gaze of each. They saw that he was about to give them a decree that was his conclusion on the present crisis.

"Listen to me," he began. "We are going back to White Falls united in our understanding. From this moment on we do not admit even to ourselves that the trouble here in New York was more than an acute

illness—Rosalind's—our alarm and your haste to reach her. You were both air-sick. Rosalind's trouble proved to be a slight ptomaine poisoning. If a breath of the truth touches my name. . . ."

His piercing eyes finished a significant sentence.

Rosalind stirred uncomfortably. She was half sitting on the center table, her gloved hands moving restlessly on her velvet bag. "Please go on," she urged, and Alice knew it was a plea for mercy to her mother. Already he had begun to speak again.

"Regardless of what we may feel or think from now on, we are to behave as we have always behaved. Rosalind, I am noticing that you hesitate when you address me. You avoid the name you have always used. You must cease that sort of thing immediately. Do you understand? Alice, do you understand?"

They both bent their heads in assent. Rosalind went toward the door, but her father was not done. He recalled her to add, unnecessarily, and with a further relapse into his old, irritating arrogance: "Our name, our position and Nico are to be our first consideration. Nico is never to know this. He must . . . believe in his mother."

Rosalind had been looking at Mr. Karanoff with a glazed stare that was witness to her effort not to look at her mother, but at the last words she turned like a mechanical figure to which a thrill of electric current gives life. Then with a rush she was on her knees before her mother. "Darling, Nico will believe in you *anyway*. *I* believe in you! mother, I don't know what

it is. . . . I don't know why I'm so dumb when *I love you so.* Darling, darling mother, I do love you. If you'll wait. Can you wait for me? I can't catch up. That time. . . . That time you sent me away to school. . . . I'm thinking of all those things. Oh. . . ."

"My dearest. . . . My Rosalind. . . ."

"I have to go back—way back and live it all over again. I'm all lost."

Lost. Lost. That was the refrain that recurred and recurred. She was lost and hunting her way. She had turned back on her trail to relive the scenes of her childhood that her new knowledge was illuminating. It was illuminating and it was poisoning those bright memories.

Her mother soothed her as she had soothed Alice in the afternoon, stifling her own emotion, controlling her touch, putting tenderness and healing rather than the passion of her heartbreak into her kisses because she would not let them suffer the further hurt of pity for herself.

Rosalind was in her arms. Alice heard: "I know now why you've been better than other mothers, always there, always loving me when I was bad. . . . Oh, so patient and generous to me! I understand, and yet, and yet. . . ."

"Darling, I know. . . . It's a long journey for you. Don't force yourself. . . ."

Mr. Karanoff separated them. The bell boys were waiting, the taxi was waiting, but the train would not wait. . . .

High-rolled fur collars, *cloches,* set low, were the shelter in which they passed through the batteries of lights and people for the first part of their journey. But in the morning there was no need for shelter, for Mrs. Karanoff was outwardly unperturbed, ready to smile, and Rosalind wore the impenetrable mask once more. She was alone again, lost and alone, sealed in a vacuum of pain.

It seemed to Alice that Mr. Karanoff's expression was almost happy. Was it possible that he was relieved that the whole thing was in the open where his magnanimity could be appreciated and where it gave him a power over Rosalind and her mother that he had chosen not to exert before? Perhaps, like the mills of the gods he was grinding slow, but exceeding small. His day of vengeance had dawned and he was feeling again and again, increasingly, satisfaction in his own behavior. He had chosen the better way, his reward would be long and sweet.

Such was Alice's interpretation of his manner, an interpretation that she did not alter so long as he displayed the arrogance she so disliked. After Christmas when they had gone through the festival—veritable actors, all—she began to see that the rejuvenating power of the truth had been brief. His joy in dominance was on the wane and his suffering in the punishment he constantly and sometimes unwittingly inflicted began to wear him down.

New Year's night he was ill again. He went to his office in the morning, however, and did not return until

his usual hour. As he limped into the great hall Rosalind was descending the stairs in a dress that caught his attention. He stood leaning on his stick, humped like a bird that is cold, and looking up at her with suffering eyes. He had on his overcoat and hat.

Rosalind stopped a few steps below the landing. She wore a plain dark jersey dress with a round collar and Windsor tie. The cuffs were snug about her wrists, the skirt covered her knees with a generous margin. They looked at each other a long moment before Mr. Karanoff slowly removed his hat, and Rosalind's erect head inclined to one side in a softening of her whole attitude. She finished the descent and helped him carefully with his coat.

"I was waiting for you, daddy. You're feeling awful, aren't you? When you're rested will you come up to the schoolroom? Mother and Nico are in your study. I want to talk."

"Ask somebody to fix me a drink, Rosalind. Yes, I'll come up."

He climbed very slowly, and Rosalind, her arm through his, tried to be of some assistance. She stayed with him while he washed his face and hands, and walked beside him into the schoolroom, where Alice was receiving a tray from a maid. "They sent you *tea!* Poor darling, no drinks. Dad, can't we *ever* get rid of the old sciatica? I wish I could do something to help you." She put her hand over his and he turned his unhappy eyes to her.

"Dad, I've been trying to tell you . . . something

important. Now I'm ready. I want to go down to the mills and learn the business."

He drank some tea, a long draught, to cover whatever disturbance her announcement had caused. "Why?" he asked, as if he didn't know.

"I have two reasons. Don't you know what they are?"

"I can't say that I do."

"You are so sweet to me. There's that; and another one." She took up her spoon and slowly stirred her tea. "Mother explained . . . that day, about your special ambition to have me . . . somebody succeed you at the mills. Everything would be better if it all came out that way."

There was no sound in the room until Mr. Karanoff said, "I understand what you're feeling." Then: "It might take more than your good intentions in the matter to make a business woman of you." His eye ran over her dress again with comprehension, and fixed on her with tenderness. "You would want to begin next summer?"

"Now."

"And not go back to Miss Belden's!" For the first time he let go of himself. "That would never do. We can't consider that. . . . You must graduate in June."

"No, dad! I can't go back there where those girls know me the way I was. I can't do that."

"You feel so different?"

"Oh, I am different! All the world and everything is different."

He grumbled, "You don't eat." From his tone one might infer that he thought the trouble was centered in that fact.

"I can't."

He pushed his plate and cup from him as if he too were done with eating.

"Alice. Here's another thistle. We must take hold of it. What shall we do with this child?"

Alice had just begun work again on a piece of linen she had been mending when the tea tray had interrupted her.

"Try now, dear, to drink that tea and eat your toast," she said calmly. "You can think better if you aren't hungry." Rosalind raised the cup and sipped slowly. "I believe, Mr. Karanoff, that Rosalind ought to decide these matters for herself."

"Not finish at Miss Belden's?'

"I think she'll decide to finish if you tell her you particularly want her to."

His eyes moved from Alice's face to Rosalind's. He considered. "Well. . . . I won't tell her that." He said it as if Rosalind were not present. "Yes, she must decide for herself."

"May I start at the office to-morrow then?"

A light illumined his countenance and shone on Rosalind. His hand closed over hers in a close pressure, but he made no other answer to her question.

XXI

FOR some time after Rosalind left them, Mr. Karanoff sat on in the twilight, leaning heavily on the schoolroom table, resting, listening to Alice, who was talking of Rosalind. She was emphasizing her youth and the confusion of her new situation. "She's trying to show you her gratitude; and she's trying to justify her own existence."

"Poor little girl. Poor child. I know, but I can't have her down there at the mills. It's not the place for her. It wouldn't do."

"Not yet."

Alice lighted a low lamp across the room from where they were sitting. It hardly dispelled the twilight, only warmed and tinted it. When she returned to her chair she began to set her mending basket to rights.

"She has always had that barrier that I have thought of as glass. She uses it when she is self-conscious, or in any way uncertain of herself. It is a cover for the real Rosalind—warm-hearted, joyous—or it used to be. I pray that the stoniness will not become the real Rosalind; the joyousness become acting."

Alice wound the tape measure neatly and snapped an elastic band around it; she picked pins and needles from the bottom of the basket and wove them into her small, flannel-covered pincushion. Mr. Karanoff's tired eyes followed every movement of her hands. She saw that it rested him to watch her.

"I wanted to save her from bitterness. . . ."

He had not been saved from bitterness! He had been more sinned against than Rosalind. Of them all, he knew best what she was enduring.

Alice said, "I am not afraid of that for her. It is grief and shock; she wants to seem the same, but she can't. The modern girl is supposed to be neither intolerant nor shockable. Because of that I marvel at Rosalind."

"Umm. . . . This is too deep to be affected by fashions in feeling. Tolerance for other girls' mothers and for herself, perhaps, but not. . . ."

"Not for herself." Alice said quickly. "Never!"

"No. No, I suppose not." He moved painfully as if to bestir himself from drowsiness. "This office work—I can't think of it for her." She had touched him deeply; he could not forget her offer, nor could he accept it. "She must go away. What about Nico? Is he ready for Europe yet?"

"Yes, any time." Alice put the mending basket aside.

"You could take them both over. She's got to have time, and absence from her mother. Perhaps a little absence would be better than . . . much."

"Won't you wait till she sees that for herself?"

"As I think of it, that's impossible. She's convalescing from ptomaine. Remember, that's why she's leaving Miss Belden's. The same reason would keep her out of the office." He pushed back his chair clumsily and indicated his afflicted leg. "I'm going back to White Sulphur. No use here. This leg; this weather."

"Why not take Rosalind with you . . . to recover from the effects of ptomaine?"

"That's our solution! That's the right idea. Make Rosalind see it. Do that at once, will you? To-night."

After a brief struggle, he succeeded in getting out of his chair. As he limped to the door Alice had sudden realization that the plan he had decided upon, that she herself had suggested, would leave Mrs. Karanoff alone, desolate in the great house. She spoke impulsively. "Mr. Karanoff. Wait!"

He turned on the threshold to face her. "If you take Rosalind with you, we'll be leaving Mrs. Karanoff all alone here! We didn't think of that."

He looked annoyed, and slowly began to turn away from her, saying, as if he didn't care whether she heard or not, "Unfortunately, that can't be helped."

When he was well on his way from the schoolroom, Alice closed the door softly and quenched the little glowing lamp. She went to one of the windows and waited till her eyes should focus to the dim blue of evening. It seemed to her that her heart was soaked like a wet sponge with tears for the sorrows under this roof. Not very great sorrows as the world counted them, but so much of it unnecessary, so much of it ignorance.

Failure in judgment was the root of most woe—a lack, not to be censured, only deplored with pity. It seemed to her that might she have been suffered to lead this little family, herself obedient always to that inner

voice which she had learned to heed, the most painful blunders could have been avoided. Why was it that they who stumbled in the dark had power, and she who followed the unfailing light was . . . servant?

She was looking down the hillside toward the guest house and the grove beyond. High up from the face of the sky, first stars shone like bright eyes through a veil of lacy twigs; a path of light from the house led to the cabin's squat door, and sentinel trees stood back, dark and still, brooding like solitary human figures. The mystery and power of a Zorn etching were in the sketch her window framed.

If she might be excused from dinner. . . . As well ask to be excused from taking Nico back to Boston! Dinner had become one of her first duties since Mr. Karanoff emphasized the importance of it as a family ceremony at which each must play a part, save Nico, of course. He played no part; he was unconscious audience of their acting and by his response they each knew whether or not their rôles were successfully performed.

The embarrassment of that ceremonious dinner hour in the great dining room had its source in the presence of Mrs. Karanoff. Necessarily she was eliminated from this last decision. Her status was, subtly, that of a stranger; she had to wait and watch—indeed, they all had to wait and watch Rosalind's readjustment to the new yet unchanged self she saw in her mother. It seemed to be increasingly difficult for Rosalind to meet her eyes directly. There was no shifting in her mother's

gaze, only the effort to bear bravely the wincing in her daughter's, for she could see that the child's very love for her made her thoughts an offense and hurt them both.

Alice followed Rosalind to her room soon after dinner, but paused outside the closed door while she considered telling Mrs. Karanoff of her husband's decision before she even suggested the idea to Rosalind. At any moment—at the breakfast table, probably—Mr. Karanoff might say, 'Terry, I'm going to take Rosalind to White Sulphur to get over her ptomaine. You'll prefer to stay here, I suppose.' She could hear his voice and see his piercing eyes on his wife as he looked up from his paper to inform her, abruptly, of a plan that would leave her for three months alone with winter, with heartache, with fear, her companions.

Alice went to Mrs. Karanoff's room. As was usual now, the family had scattered after dinner; the great house was quiet save for Nico's golden chromatic scales that poured through the halls like sunlight. Wherever his mother was, Alice hoped the liquid sweetness of the instrument, given brain and soul by the boy, was reaching her with its compensating solace.

She was not in her room. It was unlighted, drowsing, and freshly cool as it awaited her. Alice walked about noticing the absence of scent; there was only the frosty ozone, as of pine trees, blowing in the few inches of open window to give it fragrance. She did not use perfumes; ascetically, she disliked them for Rosalind.

"They are an allure, Rosalind; provocative. I don't like the idea of them."

Through one of the windows Alice caught a glimpse of her muffled figure adding movement to the Zorn etching that now was given distinctness by the bright illumination from the house. She must be on her way to the cabin. She did such things, escaped into the night, walked sometimes, along the wood paths, or drove Rosalind's roadster, and when she returned and saw the troubled inquiring faces of her family her explanation was always without mystery, without passion or dramatic effect. Once: "Didn't you know? I had to see about the guest house curtains?" Another time: "It's such a night, all star-shine and shadows!" Her smile, ineffable, her eyes, themselves star-shine and shadows—old stars, fathomless shadows.

Alice watched her out of sight before she went back to Rosalind's door. She was admitted immediately into the glowing sanctum of frivolous lamps and cushions, frivolous dolls and draperies—the setting for a frivolous young thing whose time of frivolity was past.

"I've been putting everything in beautiful order," Rosalind said. "Every box and every drawer."

She pointed dramatically to a waste basket full of letters, torn and crumpled that stood by the door. "*Those.* Huge thrills at school. I'm going to burn them." Alice saw a departing file of young loves marching on. Rosalind's open desk showed empty pigeon holes ready for new records of a new time. Bunny's picture, that had been on her dressing table, and moved

later to her desk, was now on the wall among those who once had been and were no more dominant in her affections.

Alice missed the tiny mosaic frame that had circled a snapshot of Norris. It had disappeared.

Rosalind was talking about a rearrangement of furniture and looking to Alice for approval of her ideas. Alice nodded, murmuring, "Good! Yes, I would like that." Then she said, "Rosalind, your father's health has decided him that he must go back to White Sulphur. I think he very much wants you to go with him. Soon. You know how he is; he decides and then immediately he must be off. Can you tell me what you are going to do? I must write to Miss Belden."

Rosalind sat down sideways on her desk chair and crossed her silken knees. She leaned toward Alice and fixed with troubled and penetrating scrutiny on her face. "Alice, do you know, *I don't think he wants me at the mills.*"

"Dear, I don't believe he does. Not yet."

Rosalind's brows drew together with distress. "Poor mother! Don't you see, Alie, how I want to make things come out the way she meant them to? Do the thing I was created to do?"

"Try to save the sacrifice from waste? Yes, I see. I believe in time that you will."

"It seems to me he's all over wanting the very thing that started all the trouble."

"Yes."

"Then I can't help!" She threw out her hands in a

gesture of defeat. "That might have made it beautiful . . . or worth while. . . ."

"You can't help in a way he has outgrown. You must catch up with him. He has changed. He just wants you to be his child, and love him."

For a long time Rosalind sat inert, brooding upon her problem.

"Corny's coming over to-night," she said at last. "Would that make them happy? The two mills?"

"Not if it didn't make you happy." Alice added, "Would it? Make you happy?"

Rosalind roused. Mention of Corny had reminded her that she must dress for him. She went to her dressing table and tipped the silk shades of the electric candles so that their unflattering light was on her face. She looked tired.

"Corny knows I've been through something terrible that involves Norris. He understands that it was no ordinary trouble, and he has been dear about it; nobody could be dearer. Sympathetic, you know, but not curious. He told me yesterday that his mother had heard from Lyda. She said Norris didn't come home for Christmas. She was all ready for him. Fatted calf, I suppose, and then he didn't come; I know he was alone somewhere. . . . Maybe in a city; maybe in some desolate camp."

"Corny didn't know where he was?"

"No. I don't believe Lyda knew."

Alice could easily see him, as Rosalind suggested, alone in brightly lighted streets; desolate in festive

Christmas crowds. He was not the man to lose his sick heart in debauch.

Rosalind was saying, "I admire Corny more every day—as a friend. I could get engaged to him and marry him in a few years probably, but Alice, I can never marry anybody and not have him know all the truth about me, and I can't decide—would telling be fair to mother? If it isn't, then I give up marriage, for I couldn't live a lie with the man I love or my children!"

That was it! That was the barrier between her and her mother that she could not raze.

"You will never have to, but think how far off that is! You're so young. Is Corny urging you to think of marriage? You don't have to listen to him if you don't want to. You can't make your parents happy by sacrificing yourself. Forget marriage. Just now, the thing for you to do is to think of your love for your mother —what it is you need to take you back to her. Think of that; ask for it, and be happy."

Rosalind swung around to face Alice who had risen. "Then let me go away!" she cried. "Out of this house. . . . I'd leave to-morrow."

"She wants to go with you. It's the thing she needs," Alice reported to Mr. Karanoff.

"Miss Belden's? Has she given that up definitely?"

"She thinks she has, but I think in a few weeks she'll feel quite differently. I won't tell Miss Belden she is never coming back?"

"Oh, no. No, no." His face showed relief and satis-

faction. He was fingering a Bock Twist cigar, looking at it with amused respect. "You and Nico are off day after to-morrow, aren't you? The afternoon train? That will suit us too. The sooner the better."

To his wife he said, "You'll find plenty to keep you busy. . . ."

There was no interrogation in his words. It was a statement that he himself doubted, and his doubt made him uncomfortable. He held a match to the absurd cigar, but the flame burned itself out and passed in blue futility, for his eyes had met her eyes in a look that was like a cry—like a cry of endearment and hunger and remorse. He reached forward hiding his revealing face upon her hand. He kissed the hand and held it to his cheek. "I'll stay here," she was saying.

"Alone. . . ." He had drawn her to him; he was holding her close, kissing her face, her hair, her lips. . . .

A moment that was like a love psalm had passed.

On the last day, Alice did unnecessary work that she might be constantly occupied with tasks that would keep her from seeing the stark, still endurance in that face—a face through which a spirit that strove to rise above the level of mere endurance shone steadily. Starshine and shadows; and the stars brighter because of the shadows.

When the moment for parting came, Nico returned his mother's kiss perfunctorily and dashed for the waiting car, and Alice followed him. From within the limou-

sine—that ever-welcoming shelter of her arrivals and departures at White Falls—she saw the three step out into the *porte-cochère.* Rosalind's features were set with determination to be natural in their parting. She took her mother's face between her hands and kissed her lips once, then turned away, hesitating uncertainly behind Mr. Karanoff's broad bulk. He put an arm about his wife's shoulders and drew her close, looking down fixedly into her eyes while her tremulous smile faded slowly from her lips. Then he patted her shoulder and dropped a kiss on her hair. For a long moment they stood there close, closer, unable to make the break of parting.

Behind them the rough stucco walls of the house rose and formed in implacable Moorish towers, square, arch-trimmed, symbolical. They had long been the prison walls of a great hope; they were the mausoleum now of a dead hope, the birthplace, perhaps, of a new hope.

Rosalind was the first one to move away. Her agitated hesitation ended in a quick rush toward the car. She sat down by Alice and occupied herself with her gloves, her bag. Mr. Karanoff's weight descended cautiously and the car began to move.

"Wait. Oh, wait." It was Rosalind. She was out of her seat; the car door was open. She was crying, "Mother, mother, mother. I need to kiss you again. I don't want to go." She had stumbled on the stone step, her hands outstretched to her mother, and she stayed there on her knees while her mother bent above her.

Nico exploded in amazement. Mr. Karanoff heaved himself up to reach over the chauffeur and strike the horn. It blared shockingly, and Mrs. Karanoff, answering its imperative reminder of Nico's presence, pushed Rosalind gently from her. "You must go, darling. I understand. . . . I understand. . . ."

Again Rosalind was in her place and the car was moving. Nico leaned out to shout and wave; turning, Alice waved through the back window, but she could see nothing at first—only the blur of a small dark figure alone in the January dusk. Rosalind was trembling, her wet, quivering face against Alice's shoulder. She had found her handkerchief. Under cover of Nico's noisy arraignment of her she was crying, "All day I've been trying, but I couldn't say any of the things I'd planned to. I wanted to, but I couldn't. Then . . . and then she said she understood. . . ."